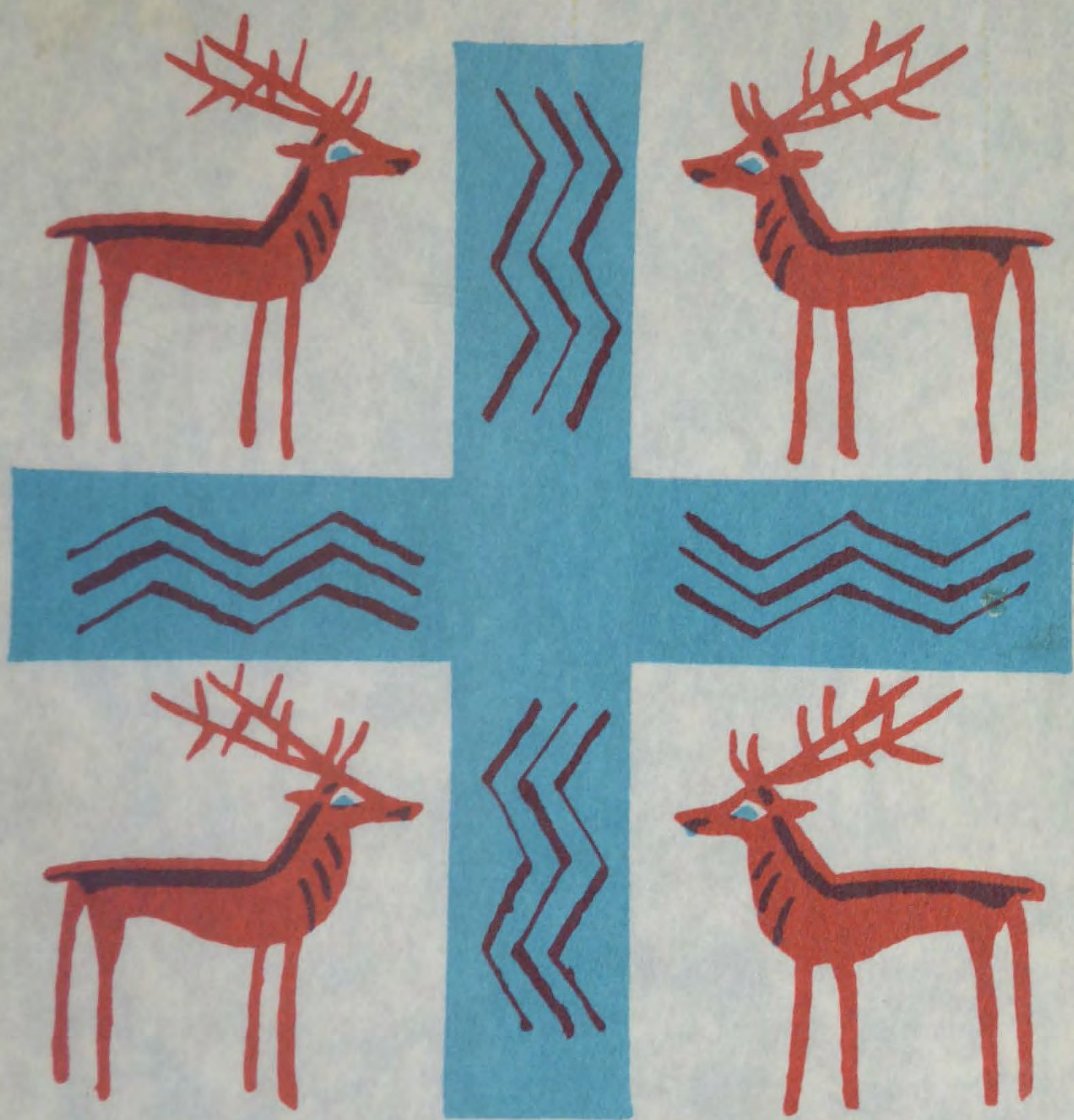


KNOX-COX



THE GOSPEL  
STORY



The left hand pages of this book contains the whole story of the Life of Christ told entirely in the words of the Evangelists. Each incident is taken from the Gospel in which it is most fully given. The translation used is Monsignor Knox's, with a few changes which he approved — quotation marks for direct speech, "you" instead of "thou," the omission of chapter and verse numbers — all of which add to the readability of the book.

The commentary by Father Cox appears on the right hand pages, directly opposite the part of the text referred to: an arrangement of which any student will immediately see the advantage — one book to work from, open in one place, no searching for references, etc.

Father Cox is an Australian, now teaching at Holy Cross College at Mosgiel. His book is intended for use in schools and study clubs, of course, but not less for the ordinary reader who finds much in the Gospels that he would like to have explained — and who inevitably misses more of their meaning than he realizes through lack of familiarity with customs and ways of thought taken for granted by the Evangelists.

A chronological harmony of the Gospels is printed at the end of the book.





Father Cox was born in Australia and pursued his early studies at St. Stanislaus' College, Bathurst. He later attended the Lateran University and the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He spent a year in Palestine, also finding time to visit other Middle East countries.

Holy Cross College, Mosgiel, where Father Cox is now Professor of Sacred Scripture, is the regional seminary for all of New Zealand.

*The Gospel Story* was originally prepared as a text for Gospel Discussion in the New Zealand Catholic Youth Movement. The New Zealand edition, which first appeared in 1950, is now in its sixth printing.

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*The jacket design, by Johannes Troyer, is derived from an early Christian symbol which depicts the four Gospel rivers where the Christians, represented by deer, come to drink.*

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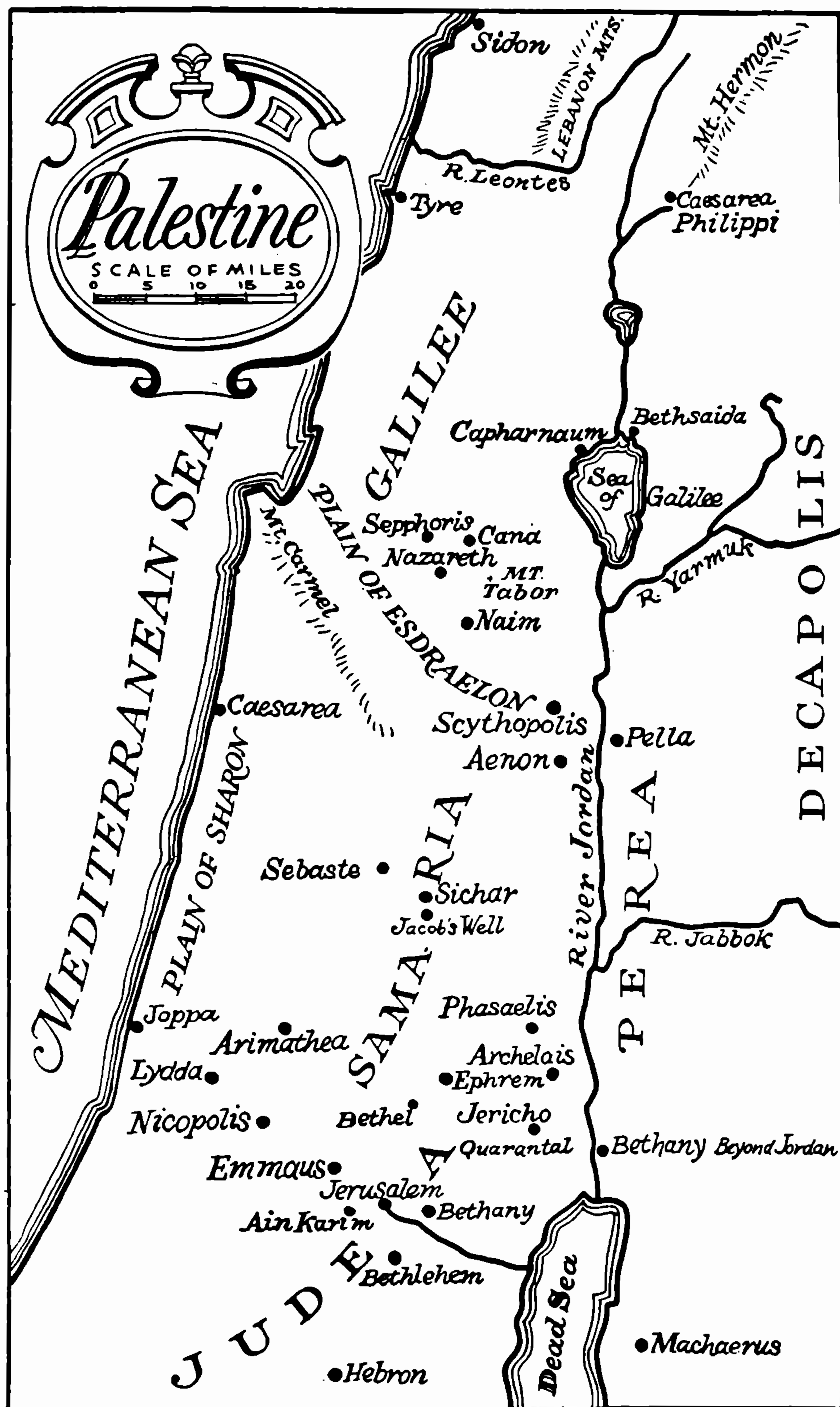
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**NEW YORK 3**



# THE GOSPEL STORY







*based on the translation  
of the Four Gospels  
by RONALD KNOX*

*arranged in a continuous narrative  
with explanations  
by RONALD COX  
C.M., S.T.L., S.S.L.*

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R. A. KNOX

Both of us Ronald—Knox and Cox—we stand  
Both undeserving in the priestly band:  
Pray that we two, both Knox and Cox, appear  
One day within the Book of Life, as here.

—*Trans. by Fr. Bernard O'Brien, S.J.*







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## HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

You cannot live like a Christian, if you think like a pagan; you cannot think like a Christian, until you think like Christ. Or, if you prefer St. Paul's way of saying it, 'Yours is to be the same mind which Christ Jesus showed' (Phil. 2, 5). The best way to acquire our Lord's outlook and ideals is by daily, intimate association with him; instead of a mere name, he must become a real, living Person. That is why the gospels are so important to right living: 'It is there his image stands out, living and breathing.'

Two difficulties immediately confront anyone who tries reading the gospels: the problem of sequence (gospel harmony), and the need of explanation. A library is necessary before you can get started. This is an attempt to provide all that is required, in one book. All four gospels are given; not a single sentence has been left out. They run as a harmonized, continuous story on the left-hand page. On the opposite page, in italic print, is the commentary; it is an explanation, paragraph by paragraph, of the gospel text. My suggestion is, that first you read an incident in the text, and then the corresponding commentary. Try reading a paragraph a day. Whenever you think of God during the day, picture him in that particular scene. Talk to him about himself, and yourself; ask his grace to help you live his life; after all, 'We are limbs of his body; flesh and bone, we belong to him' (Eph. 5, 30).

I have given emphasis in the commentary to sequence in the story; in this I have attempted to show the plan of our Lord's life. It was not a haphazard jumble of events; it was a planned revelation. He had two objectives: to redeem mankind by his death, and to found his Church to bring that redemption to men. Chapters 2-7 show him engaged on the second objective (each chapter has a sub-title on 'the kingdom'); chapters 8-11 are mainly concerned with his first objective (each chapter has a sub-title on 'Jerusalem').

I have also given considerable attention to time and place for each scene; not that I think them important. They are



meant to give an atmosphere of reality; our Lord's life is fact, not fiction. They are the historical background against which he moved; don't let them distract you from him. He is the way; he is truth and life.

There are lots of debated points in the reconstruction of the gospel scenes; the restricted space of the commentary has prevented me from mentioning other views (except rarely). In the main, I have followed the greatest of modern experts on the gospels, the late Father Lagrange, O.P. I have also made frequent references to other pages of this book, rather than refer to chapter and verse of a particular gospel. You can read *The Gospel Story* in a bus, or by the fire, and not have to go searching about in another book. These references are meant as helps to deeper understanding; they can be neglected at a first reading.

I have five departures from Monsignor Knox's published text: (1) Direct speech is indicated by the usual quotation marks. (2) The obsolete second person singular has been replaced by the more common plural; 'you' has replaced 'thou.' (3) Time, distance, and measures are given in modern equivalents; 'the ninth hour' has now become "three in the afternoon.' I have also modernized a few words here and there, such as 'crowd' in place of 'multitude.' (4) I have put in paragraph headings for each scene; these make it easy to locate any incident, and should be helpful to study groups and those using the book for meditation. (5) Where the Greek is different from the Knox text, I have made corrections. The more important of these have been translated by Mgr. Knox himself; a good example is the blind man of Bethsaida, p. 168.

9 February 1957

R. J. COX  
Holy Cross College  
Mosgiel, N.Z.



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# THE GOSPEL STORY



## *Chapter 1:* Infancy and Hidden Life



THIS chapter was not part of the original gospel preached by the apostles to the early Christians; they began with the public life of our Lord (chapter two; see also p. 430). Both St. Mark and St. John begin their gospels with the entry of John the Baptist and his baptizing our Lord; this chapter is found only in St. Matthew and St. Luke. It is obvious that St. Joseph is the source of Matthew's information (pp. 12, 22-24), as our Lady is of Luke's; the bulk of the narrative is from Luke (ten pages, Matthew three). It is hardly likely that Luke became a Christian before our Lady's death (about 42 A.D.); it seems that the source of his information was St. John, then living at Ephesus; no one was better fitted to give these intimate details of Mary's life (p. 398).

The exact year of our Lord's birth is uncertain. The first BC-AD calculation, in the sixth century, made an error of at least four years; our Lord must have been born before Herod the Great died in April, 4 B.C. (pp. 26-24). With Lagrange I have accepted 25 December, 5 B.C. for the Nativity, a little more than three months before Herod's death. This dating permits a plausible reconstruction of the Coming of the Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt (the only scenes in this chapter that any system of dating affects); it also gives a satisfactory meaning to 'about thirty' (p. 34), and makes our Lord's life on earth thirty-three years (p. 405). I have taken the Cyrenus census (p. 16) to mean that held in 6 A.D. The time of the Augustus census is too uncertain to base any dating on. Though not recorded till the fourth century, 25 December is the traditional birthday of our Lord; with the exception of the Wise Men, the chronology of all other events in this chapter depends on it.

I think guest room (p. 16) is the correct meaning of *kataluma* (translated 'upper room,' p. 342), not the traditional village inn; our Lord was born in a cave under a house, not in one out in the fields. It fits in better with eastern ways: an inn was used only by passing travellers. It also removes the slur on the people of Bethlehem. St. Joseph shows up better as the guardian of the Holy Family; there is no hurried arrival on Christmas Eve.



Many have been at pains to set forth the history of what time has brought to fulfilment among us, following the tradition of those first eye-witnesses who gave themselves up to the service of the word. And I too, most noble Theophilus, have resolved to put the story in writing for you as it befell, having first traced it carefully from its beginnings, that you may understand the instruction you have already received, in all its certainty.

### **Gabriel Appears to Zachary**

In the days when Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest called Zachary, of Abia's turn of office, who had married a wife of Aaron's family, by name Elizabeth; they were both well approved in God's sight, following all the commandments and observances of the Lord without reproach. They had no child; Elizabeth was barren, and both were now well advanced in years. He, then, as it happened, was doing a priest's duty before God in order of his turn of office; and had been chosen by lot, as was the custom among the priests, to go into the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense there, while the whole congregation of the people stood praying outside, at the hour of sacrifice. Suddenly he saw an angel of the Lord, standing at the right of the altar where incense was burnt. Zachary was bewildered at the sight, and overcome with fear.

But the angel said, 'Zachary, do not be afraid; your prayer has been heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, is to bear you a son, to whom you shall give the name of John. Joy and gladness shall be yours, and many hearts shall rejoice over his birth, for he is to be high in the Lord's favour; he is to drink neither wine nor strong drink; and from the time when he is yet a child in his mother's womb he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. He shall bring back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God,



This is St. Luke's preface to his gospel, dedicated to his friend Theophilus. Like the other writers of sacred scripture, he gathered his facts as all authors do; he had his own plan, kept his own style, but God was with him so intimately, moving him to write, enlightening his mind, that the story he told, every word of it, came from God also. God is the chief author, St. Luke his living instrument. The truth of the scriptures is therefore the truth of God himself; there cannot be a single error in them.

### **The Temple September 6 B.C.**

The Jews hated Herod. He had won the throne by intrigue and violence, and held it only by the power of Rome. Worst of all he was a foreigner, the first ever to sit on the throne of David. Surely now the Lord would have pity on his chosen people, and no longer delay his long-promised salvation!

The temple in Jerusalem was God's dwelling-place on earth; it had been the centre of their religious life for a thousand years; there alone could they offer sacrifice to him. Morning and evening a lamb was sacrificed on the altar of burnt-offerings in front of the sanctuary, and incense burnt on the golden altar inside. Great numbers assembled to assist at the evening sacrifice, and to pray especially for the redemption of Israel.

The priesthood was restricted to the tribe of Levi, now divided into twenty-four family groups (Abia was one). They lived in different parts of Palestine, and came into residence in the temple only for their week on duty, twice a year. Lots were drawn for the more important priestly functions, such as the sacrifice of the lamb and the offering of incense. So great was the number of priests (about 20,000), that no one was permitted to officiate a second time; many never enjoyed the privilege at all.

One afternoon in September, 6 B.C., the fifty priests on duty for the day cast lots to see who would offer the incense. It is Zachary that takes the bowl of incense, for the first and last time in his life, and walks up the steps of the sanctuary. A heavy curtain at the door of the holy place hides him from view; the light from the



ushering in his advent in the spirit and power of an Elias. He shall unite the hearts of all, the fathers with the children, and teach the disobedient the wisdom that makes men just, preparing for the Lord a people fit to receive him.'

And Zachary said to the angel, 'By what sign am I to be assured of this? I am an old man now, and my wife is far advanced in age.'

The angel answered, 'My name is Gabriel, and my place is in God's presence; I have been sent to speak with you, and to bring you this good news. Behold, you shall be dumb, and have no power of speech, until the day when this is accomplished, and that, because you have not believed my promise, which shall in due time be fulfilled.'

And now all the people were waiting for Zachary, and wondering that he delayed in the sanctuary so long; but he, when he came out, could speak no word to them; whereupon they made sure that he had seen some vision in the sanctuary. He could but stand there making signs to them, for he remained dumb.

And so, when the days of his ministry were at an end, he went back to his house. It was after those days that his wife, Elizabeth, conceived, and for five months she dwelt retired; she said, 'It is the Lord who has done this for me, visiting me at his own time, to take away my reproach among men.'

### **The Annunciation to Mary**

When the sixth month came, God sent the angel Gabriel to a city of Galilee called Nazareth, where a virgin dwelt, betrothed to a man of David's lineage; his name was Joseph, and the virgin's name was Mary. Into her presence the angel came, and said, 'Hail, you who are full of grace; the Lord is with you.' She was much perplexed at hearing him speak so, and cast about in her mind, what she was to make of such a greeting.



seven-branched candlestick on his left shines on the golden altar of incense before him; only one curtain separates him from the holy of holies, God's throne-room where none may enter. This is his great moment: he stands in God's presence on behalf of God's people. The angel, standing between the altar and the candlestick, makes known the part to be played by Zachary's son in preparing the Jewish people for the coming of the Messias. He indicates John's sanctity and greatness; he will live the ascetic life of a Nazirite (Numbers 6); he will be cleansed from original sin before birth (at the Visitation, p.8); he will possess the qualities of Elias, the greatest of the Old Testament prophets (p. 172).

After offering incense the priest stood on the sanctuary steps and blessed the people waiting in the courtyards. Zachary could not speak a single word. Both from his agitated appearance and his gestures they concluded that he had experienced some divine communication. Had they only known, they were witnessing the first scene in their own redemption.

The village of Ain Karim, five miles west of Jerusalem, is the traditional home of Zachary. The 'five months' is mentioned only as a literary device to introduce the next scene, which took place in 'the sixth month'; both parents kept to themselves until John was born. The 'reproach' Elizabeth speaks of is her childlessness; it is in solitude and silence that she can best thank God for the blessing of motherhood (the saints have always been reticent about discussing God's favours to them). What better preparation could there be for the birth of her son who was to be a hermit?

#### **Nazareth 25 March 5 B.C.**

Mary was probably praying alone, in the home of her parents, Joachim and Anne. The angel salutes her as one who enjoys the favour of the Lord in the greatest degree possible; God's only sinless creature. In her humility she is puzzled by such words of praise. Then Gabriel tells his mission: she is to be the mother of the Messias. (There is not necessarily any indication of his divine nature in this first message.)

But it raises a difficulty in Mary's mind: surely he knows that



Then the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have found favour in the sight of God. And behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and shall bear a son, and shall call him Jesus. He shall be great, and men will know him for the Son of the most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob eternally; his kingdom shall never have an end.'

But Mary said to the angel, 'How can that be, since I have no knowledge of man?'

And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most High will overshadow you. Thus this holy offspring of yours shall be known for the Son of God. See, moreover, how it fares with your cousin Elizabeth; she is old, yet she, too, has conceived a son; she who was reproached with barrenness is now in her sixth month, to prove that nothing can be impossible with God.'

And Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be unto me according to your word.'

And with that the angel left her.

### **Mary Visits Elizabeth**

In the days that followed, Mary rose up and went with all haste to a town of Juda, in the hill country where Zachary dwelt; and there entering in she gave Elizabeth greeting. No sooner had Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting than the child leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth herself was filled with the Holy Ghost; so that she cried out with a loud voice, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. How have I deserved to be thus visited by the mother of my Lord? Why, as soon as ever the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you for your believing; the message that was brought to you from the Lord shall have fulfilment.'



she has vowed herself to a life of virginity, and Joseph too. Does Gabriel mean that Joseph is to be the father of this child? Now the angel tells her that Jesus is to have no human father; she will conceive by the miraculous power of God. This divine power will make the child holy; but it will not of itself make him divine (Jesus might have had no human father and still have been only a human person). He already is the Son of God by eternal generation from the Father; the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is now ready to take a human nature, in addition to his divine. It would have been possible for the Son of God to take a human nature conceived in the ordinary way of Joseph and Mary; this child would still have been divine, but Joseph would have been his father as man. But in fact Mary remained a virgin and was mother of God as well; only God the Father and Mary could say, 'My Son, Jesus.'

The Incarnation took place immediately on Mary's acceptance of the dignity of mother of God; her free consent was needed for our redemption. Some have wondered why she raised any difficulty, since she must have known of Isaias' virgin-birth prophecy (p. 14). But Isaias does not use the precise word for a virgin, bethulah; he uses almah, a word so elastic in meaning that it can refer to a virgin, and yet not exclude the notion of child-bearing.

#### **Ain Karim April 5 B.C.**

The angel's mention of Elizabeth was not a casual item of information; there was a close bond between their two sons. Mary joined one of the pilgrim groups going up to Jerusalem for the paschal feast. She must have wondered, as she came on her journey, whether she should make known to Elizabeth all that the angel had told her at Nazareth. But she did not have to; as soon as she greeted Elizabeth in her home at Ain Karim, both mother and son became aware of the presence of the Messias in Mary's womb. John was cleansed there and then from original sin, and Elizabeth was enlightened from on high with the knowledge that Mary was the holiest of women. She could not help contrasting Mary's faith with her own husband's lack of it.

Mary had not yet said one word to anybody about the great



And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit has found joy in God, who is my Saviour, because he has looked graciously upon the lowliness of his handmaid. Behold, from this day forward all generations will count me blessed; because he who is mighty, he whose name is holy, has wrought for me his wonders. He has mercy upon those who fear him, from generation to generation; he has done valiantly with the strength of his arm, driving the proud astray in the conceit of their hearts; he has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty-handed. He has protected his servant Israel, keeping his merciful design in remembrance, according to the promise which he made to our forefathers, Abraham and his posterity for evermore.'

### **Birth of John the Baptist**

Mary returned home when she had been with her about three months; meanwhile, Elizabeth's time had come for her child-bearing, and she bore a son. Her neighbours and her kinsfolk, hearing how wonderfully God had showed his mercy to her, came to rejoice with her; and now, when they assembled on the eighth day for the circumcision of the child, they were for calling him Zachary, because it was his father's name; but his mother answered, 'No, he is to be called John.'

And they said, 'There is none of your kindred that is called by this name,' and began asking his father by signs what name he would have him called by. So he asked for a tablet, and wrote on it the words, 'His name is John'; and they were all astonished. Then, of a sudden, his lips and his tongue were unloosed, and he broke into speech, giving praise to God; so that fear came upon all their neighbourhood, and there was none of these happenings but was noised abroad throughout all the hill country of



honour that had been done her at Nazareth; yet her secret was shared and treasured by her kinswoman. Such complete acceptance and spontaneous praise from Elizabeth moved Mary deeply. From the depth of her heart she spoke; it was not a reply to Elizabeth, nor even addressed to God; it was a kind of meditation aloud, an expression of her own holy joy and gratitude for God's mighty favour to her, and through her to the whole world. It was spoken in Aramaic (Hebrew had been a dead language for centuries), under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is called the Magnificat, from the first word of the Latin translation. Down to the word 'wonders,' she is speaking of her divine motherhood, the great favour done her on 25 March. The rest of the poem is a survey of God's dealings with men and his reversal of human values, exemplified both in Mary and in his own people. Her son is the Messiah, promised long ago to Abraham, the founder of Israel.

#### **At Nazareth 24 June 5 B.C.**

Our Lady stayed with Elizabeth until John was born; that is the point of the 'three months'; the gospel account is surely Mary's personal recital. There were no maternity wards in those days, and Mary assisted at the birth of Elizabeth's son.

Circumcision, like Baptism for us, was the rite by which Jewish boys were initiated into the chosen people of God. Since Zachary was unable to speak, and Elizabeth still too weak to take much part in the ceremony, the relatives decided to call the boy by his father's name. When Elizabeth objected, they thought to get Zachary's approval; though present in the room, he had been ignored because of his dumbness. They made signs to him, either because he was deaf or, possibly, to hide their activity from Elizabeth; she would have heard them if they spoke, but could not see their gestures. There was a wooden block covered with wax nearby; Zachary had been using this means of communication for the past nine months; so he signalled for it. There was no question of giving the boy a name; God had already given him one.

The astonishment of the people at the unexpected agreement



Judea. All those who heard it laid it to heart; 'Why, then,' they asked, 'what will this boy grow up to be?' And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

Then his father, Zachary, was filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke in prophecy: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has visited his people, and wrought their redemption. He has raised up a sceptre of salvation for us among the posterity of his servant David, according to the promise which he made by the lips of holy men that have been his prophets from the beginning; salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all those who hate us. So he would carry out his merciful design towards our fathers, by remembering his holy covenant. He had sworn an oath to our father Abraham, that he would enable us to live without fear in his service, delivered from the hands of our enemies, passing all our days in holiness, and approved in his sight. And you, my child, will be known for a prophet of the most High, going before the Lord, to clear his way for him; you will make known to his people the salvation that is to release them from their sins. Such is the merciful kindness of our God, which has bidden him come to us, like a dawning from on high, to give light to those who live in darkness, in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

And as the child grew, his spirit achieved strength, and he dwelt in the wilderness until the day when he was made manifest to Israel.

### **Marriage of Mary and Joseph**

And this was the manner of Christ's birth. His mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, but they had not yet come together, when she was found to be with child, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon her husband, Joseph (for he was a right-minded man, and would not



of the old couple about the name of the child (and both of them so positive about it, too) was nothing compared to what they felt when Zachary stood up and broke into speech, almost into song. This hymn is known as the Benedictus, from the first word of the Latin translation; it is the 'speech, giving praise of God' that caused such excitement and speculation throughout the land. Literary considerations prompted St. Luke to leave it till he had finished the story, though in actual fact the Benedictus was spoken immediately Zachary regained his speech.

Like Mary's Magnificat, the Benedictus was spoken under divine inspiration; that is the meaning of 'filled with the Holy Ghost.' In only one sentence does Zachary make mention of his son, John ('you, my child'). The rest of the hymn is taken up with thanksgiving to God for the great favour of redemption, which Mary's son is to accomplish. This is most fitting, because all these wonderful happenings are meant for him; John's life has no meaning apart from his. This scene is most vivid if we recall that the Messiah himself was present there, in his mother's womb.

Zachary recalls the promises of a Redeemer made by God to Abraham, and through the prophets of the Old Testament; God has not forgotten them; at long last he has fulfilled his promises. Zachary shows, unlike many of the leaders of the Jewish nation, that he understands the real purpose of Christ's coming: to save men from sin, not from subjection to Rome.

With every year John grew in holiness of life. It was not until after his parents' death that he lived in the desert, near the Dead Sea, preparing for his mission. Even then he would come up to Jerusalem each year for the great feasts.

### Nazareth July 5 B.C.

A Jewish marriage consisted of two separate ceremonies. The first was the contract (espousal, betrothal) made when the man paid the purchase price to the father of the bride. The second ceremony took place about a year later, when the husband brought his bride into his own home, and the wedding-feast was held.



have her put to open shame), was for sending her away in secret. But hardly had this thought come to his mind when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife, Mary, to yourself, for it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that she has conceived this child; and she will bear a son, whom you shall call Jesus, for he is to save his people from their sins.'

All this was so ordained to fulfil the word which the Lord spoke by his prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel' (which means, God with us).

And Joseph awoke from sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, taking his wife to himself; and he had not known her when she bore a son, to whom he gave the name of Jesus.

### The Genealogy of Our Lord

A record of how Jesus Christ, the son of David, son of Abraham, was born. Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac of Jacob, Jacob of Judas and his brethren; Judas of Phares and Zara, by Tamar; Phares of Esron, Esron of Aram, Aram of Aminadab, Aminadab of Naasson, Naasson of Salmon; Salmon of Booz, by Rahab; Booz of Obed, by Ruth; Obed of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of king David. And king David was the father of Solomon, by her that had been wife of Urias. Solomon was the father of Roboam. Roboam of Abia, Abia of Asa, Asa of Josaphat, Josaphat of Joram, Joram of Ozias, Ozias of Joatham, Joatham of Achaz, Achaz of Ezechias, Ezechias of Manasses, Manasses of Amon, Amon of Josias; and Josias was the father of Jechonias and his brethren, at the time of the removal to Babylon. And after the removal to Babylon, Jechonias was the father of Salathiel, Salathiel of Zorobabel, Zorobabel of Abiud, Abiud of Eliakim,



After the first ceremony they were legally husband and wife, but were not permitted to live together, and usually saw little of each other.

Soon after Mary's return from Ain Karim, her condition was noticeable; it was a difficult situation for Joseph, a young man in his early twenties (he was surely not an old man). He decided to divorce her privately before two witnesses, without stating the motive; this would safeguard her good name by preventing any action being taken in the public courts. From the angel's message it seems clear that he had thought of the more obvious solution of carrying out the second part of the marriage ceremony, but was afraid to do so. He knew how holy Mary was, and had approved of her vow of virginity; he must have heard, too, of some of the amazing happenings at the birth of John. He did not suspect Mary of sin, but was afraid of interfering with God's plan by marrying her. But Gabriel makes it clear that he is to give Mary both the shelter of his home and the protection of his name.

### Jesus Christ the Son of David

A family tree is not very interesting reading, but it is a most important document. It shows why Joseph was necessary in God's plan; since no records were kept for women, the descent of Jesus through his mother could not be traced in official documents. Without Joseph the early Christians could not have proved that Jesus was a descendant of Abraham and David (a necessary qualification for the Messiah). The most important name in the genealogy is David: he is mentioned first, though he did not live until a thousand years after Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people. The title 'Son of David' was the term in common use among the Jews when speaking of the Redeemer to come; it was more official than 'Messias.' This is Matthew's genealogy; since his gospel was written for Jewish Christians, he traces our Lord's ancestry back only to Abraham (Luke's genealogy goes back to Adam, p. 34). A period of 2,000 years is covered with a list of forty-one names; they are divided into three groups of fourteen, an artificial arrangement possibly based on



Eliakim of Azor, Azor of Sadoc, Sadoc of Achim, Achim of Eliud, Eliud of Eleazar, Eleazar of Mathan, Mathan of Jacob, and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; it was of her that Jesus was born who is called Christ. Thus there are fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity in Babylon, and fourteen from the captivity in Babylon to Christ.

### **The Birth of Our Lord**

It happened that a decree went out at this time from the emperor Augustus, enjoining that the whole world should be registered; this was the register which was made before Cyrenus was governor of Syria. All must go and give in their names, each in his own city; and Joseph, being of David's clan and family, came up from the town of Nazareth, in Galilee, to David's city in Judea, the city called Bethlehem, to give in his name there. With him was Mary, his betrothed, who was then in her pregnancy; and it was while they were still there that the time came for her delivery. She brought forth a son, her first-born, whom she wrapped in his swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger; there was no room for them where the guests lodged.

In the same country there were shepherds living out in the fields, keeping night-watches over their flocks. And an angel of the Lord came and stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone about them, so that they were overcome with fear. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; behold, I bring you good news of a great rejoicing for the whole people. This day, in the city of David, a Saviour has been born for you, the Lord Christ himself. This is the sign by which you are to know him; you will find a child still in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.'

Then, on a sudden, a multitude of the heavenly army appeared to them at the angel's side, giving praise to God,



the fact that the name David in Hebrew adds up to fourteen (Hebrews used the letters of the alphabet as numerals). The word 'father' is not used in our sense, but in the more general meaning of ancestor; we can show from the Old Testament that Joram was the great-great-grandfather of Ozias, not his father.

At the end of the list St. Matthew draws attention to the virginity of our Lady; Joseph is her husband, not Jesus' father. It is generally agreed that Mary also was a descendant of David.

**Bethlehem 25 December 5 B.C.**

Joseph, the protector of the Holy Family, still had a big problem on his hands: Jesus would be born of parents who had been married only five months before. He overcame the difficulty very simply by moving his home to Bethlehem. He had to make the journey there to meet the requirements of the Roman census; he decided to take Mary with him and stay there permanently. He would be among his own people and would have no trouble getting work there. A four days' journey, with a donkey to carry their belongings, brought them to the home of one of Joseph's relatives, quite likely his father, Heli (p. 34); Jacob (p. 16) was not his natural father. There were other visitors there, but in a few weeks the guest room would be theirs; meanwhile the cave-basement would give them a place to sleep. Actually this must have appealed to Mary; it would be the most secluded part of the house. She gave birth to the Saviour without any pains of childbirth and without assistance; she herself wrapped him in his infant clothes, and laid him in the manger with her own hands.

The shepherd scene tells us that our Lord was born at night. An angel appears in great majesty to announce the good news of salvation. 'City of David' is a direct reference to the Messiah; 'the people' are the Jews; the 'manger' tells them that he is not born in a rich home; the 'swaddling-clothes' that he is not abandoned, as they might expect of a child in such an odd cradle. The song of the angelic choir is the beginning of the Gloria at Mass. The gospel ('good news') is made known to these true



and saying, 'Glory to God in high heaven, and peace on earth to men that are God's friends.'

When the angels had left them and gone back into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Come, let us make our way to Bethlehem, and see for ourselves this happening which God has made known to us.'

And so they went with all haste, and found Mary and Joseph there, with the child lying in the manger. On seeing him, they made known what had been told them about this child. All those who heard it were full of amazement at the story which the shepherds told them; but Mary treasured up all these sayings, and reflected on them in her heart. And the shepherds went home giving praise and glory to God, at seeing and hearing that all was as it had been told them.

### **Presentation in the Temple**

When eight days had passed, and the boy must be circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name which the angel had given him before ever he was conceived in the womb.

And when the time had come for purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him before the Lord there. It is written in God's law, that whatever male offspring opens the womb is to be reckoned sacred to the Lord; and so they must offer in sacrifice, as God's law commanded, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. At this time there was a man named Simeon living in Jerusalem, an upright man of careful observance, who waited patiently for comfort to be brought to Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him; and by the Holy Spirit it had been revealed to him that he was not to meet death, until he had seen that Christ whom the Lord had anointed. He now came, led by the Spirit, into the temple; and when the child Jesus was brought in by his parents, to perform the custom the



**Israelites** living the simple life of the patriarchs of old; they are the authentic representatives of Israel, not the royal house of Herod, or the high priest, or the learned scribes and Pharisees.

It is not clear whether the angel's information was sufficient to guide the shepherds to the house where Jesus was born, or whether further assistance was needed. The mention of a manger would tell them to look in one of the many caves cut in the rock and used as shelters for animals; there would probably be only the one with a light showing so late at night. Actually the basilica of the Nativity is on the eastern edge of Bethlehem; so they would not have to wander through the city looking for a lighted basement. That night they told only Mary and Joseph of the angel's message; next morning they became the first to spread the good news around Bethlehem. St. Luke anticipates the spreading of the news by telling of it as though it happened that same night.

### **Jerusalem 2 February 4 B.C.**

The rite of circumcision was usually performed in the home by the father of the child, or a doctor.

Two prescriptions of the Mosaic law had to be observed on the fortieth day after the birth of a son; one concerned the mother, the other the child. A dove or a pigeon (the choice was given because doves are migrants, and absent from Palestine in winter) was to be offered as a purification-sacrifice after childbirth; the second pigeon was a thanksgiving offering. A first-born son had to be bought back from the Lord (that is why the word was used of Jesus on p. 16). First-born sons of Jewish parents had been the Lord's property ever since he spared them from the universal destruction of the first-born in Egypt at the time of the Exodus (Exodus 12). The ransom price was five shekels (a shekel was the standard Jewish silver coin, about the size of a half crown, see pp. 185, 281, 343); in modern values this would be twenty days' wages.

The ceremony took place in the Women's Court of the temple. Jesus was formally handed over to the priest in charge, who blessed him; the money was then paid into the treasury and the



law enjoined concerning him, Simeon too was able to take him in his arms.

And he said, blessing God: 'Ruler of all, now do you let your servant go in peace, according to your word; for my own eyes have seen that saving power of yours, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations. This is the light which shall give revelation to the Gentiles, this is the glory of your people Israel.' The father and mother of the child were still wondering over all that was said of him, when Simeon blessed them, and said to his mother Mary, 'Behold, this child is destined to bring about the fall of many and the rise of many in Israel; to be a sign which men will refuse to acknowledge; and so the thoughts of many hearts shall be made manifest; as for your own soul, it shall have a sword to pierce it.'

There was besides a prophetess named Anna, daughter to one Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser, (a woman greatly advanced in age, since she had lived with a husband for seven years after her maidenhood, and had now been eighty-four years a widow) who abode continually in the temple night and day, serving God with fasting and prayer. She too, at that very hour, came near to give God thanks, and spoke of the child to all that patiently waited for the deliverance of Jerusalem.

### **The Coming of the Wise Men**

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in Judea, in the days of king Herod. And thereupon certain wise men came out of the east to Jerusalem, who asked, 'Where is he that has been born, the king of the Jews? We have seen his star out in the east, and we have come to worship him.'

King Herod was troubled when he heard it, and all Jerusalem with him; so that he assembled all the chief priests and learned men among the people, and enquired of them where it was that Christ would be born. And



child given back to his mother. The cost of two pigeons was a  $\frac{1}{4}$  shekel; the priest made the offering of the birds by pouring out their blood on the altar of burnt-offerings. Mary and Joseph could not assist at this; it took place in the Priests' Court.

The ceremony did not take long. As they were leaving, an old man came up and took Jesus in his arms; aided by divine light, he understood that Jesus was the long-awaited Redeemer of the world. His Name *Simeon* (so called from the first words of the Latin translation) is the hymn for night prayers in the Church's liturgy. The imagery is taken from a watchman standing patiently with eyes alert; he can now be released from duty; what he was watching for has come into sight. Simeon understands the unique position this child is destined for: men cannot be neutral towards him; they will either accept him or reject him; he is to bring life or death to all men, Jew and Gentile alike. He links Mary (but not Joseph) with the destiny of her Son; she is to share his sorrow and sufferings; a long sharp sword vividly describes the depth and intensity of her grief of soul.

While Simeon was speaking, a woman of great age and holiness joined the group. Anna and Simeon represented the devout in Israel, who had remained true to the real spirit of the Jewish religion. There is something touching in these two welcoming the Lord into his own house, while the high priest and officials were quite unaware of his presence in the midst of them.

### Jerusalem and Bethlehem Feb. 4 B.C.

The Holy Family went back to Bethlehem; they had probably moved from the basement into the guest room by the time that the first Gentiles came to pay homage. They were probably Persian philosophers; their number is not given, but from the fact that they offered three gifts, the number three has become traditional. The names, Caspar, Melchior, and Baltassar are not mentioned till the eighth century. They arrived in the capital city of the Jews expecting everyone to know of the new heir to the throne. It was from the Jews living out in Persia since their



they told him, 'At Bethlehem in Judea; so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, of the land of Juda, are far from the least among the princes of Juda, for out of you will arise a leader who is to be the shepherd of my people Israel."'

Then, summoning the wise men in secret, Herod questioned them closely upon the time of the star's appearing. And he sent them on their way to Bethlehem, saying to them, 'Go and enquire carefully for the child, and when you have found him, bring me back word, so that I too may come and worship him.'

They obeyed the king and went on their journey; and all at once the star which they had seen in the east was there going before them, till at last it stood still over the place where the child was. They, when they saw the star, were glad beyond measure; and so, going into the dwelling, they found the child there, with his mother Mary, and fell down to worship him; and, opening their store of treasures, they offered him gifts, of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Afterwards, because they had received a warning in a dream forbidding them to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by a different way.

### **The Flight into Egypt**

As soon as they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said, 'Rise up, take with you the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt; there remain, until I give you word. For Herod will soon be making search for the child, to destroy him.'

He rose up, therefore, while it was still night, and took the child and his mother with him, and withdrew into Egypt, where he remained until the death of Herod, in fulfilment of the words which the Lord spoke by his prophet, 'I called my son out of Egypt.'

Meanwhile, when he found that the wise men had



**captivity** five hundred years before that they had heard of the king who would one day deliver Israel, and bring the whole world into subjection to his rule. Well, they had seen a bright star which surely heralded his coming. Quite true, the star had not been visible since, but they thought that the long-awaited king would be in the royal palace in Jerusalem; so they had come to see him.

The story of these three strangers was soon picked up by Herod's secret police; it caused great alarm in the royal household. No more disturbing news could have been brought to the ears of the insecure foreign despot, Herod the Great; a 'king of the Jews' was just what the people wanted; Herod was an Idumean. He was used to conspiracies to deprive him of his throne; he would soon get to the bottom of this new one. But he knew the value of cunning and craftiness; first he found out from his Jewish advisers the place where the Messiah was to be born, then he sent for the foreigners. He was relieved to hear that the new king was only a baby; they had seen the star only a few months ago. It could not be a plot among his sons, who were all grown men. Bethlehem, too, was just a small village; the foreigners seemed harmless enough; it was probably just another Messianic fairy tale. He would question them when they came back. He was quite pleasant to the learned strangers; he felt that he had the situation well in hand.

### **Bethlehem February 4 B.C.**

Herod's cunning was no match for the wisdom of God, who sent them home probably along the road south of the Dead Sea. Unnoticed, the Holy family left Bethlehem under cover of darkness; they would take five or six days to reach the Egyptian border, fifty miles south of Gaza; probably they were safely there when Herod became aware of the disappearance of the wise men. They were not as simple and harmless as he had thought; this was a conspiracy to dethrone him. If anyone thought they could outwit him, they were making a big mistake! With one of his infamous bursts of fury and violence, Herod decided on the immediate death of all boys of Jesus' age in the region of Beth-



played him false, Herod was angry beyond measure; he sent and made away with all the male children in Bethlehem and in all its neighbourhood, of two years old and less, reckoning the time by the careful enquiry which he had made of the wise men. It was then that the word spoken by the prophet Jeremy was fulfilled: 'A voice was heard in Rama, lamentation and great mourning; it was Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be comforted, because none is left.'

But as soon as Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt in a dream, and said, 'Rise up, take with you the child and his mother, and return to the land of Israel; for those who sought the child's life are dead.' So he arose, and took the child and his mother with him, and came into the land of Israel. But, when he heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to return there; and so, receiving a warning in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee; where he came to live in their own town of Nazareth, in fulfilment of what was said by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'

### The Finding in the Temple

And so the child grew and came to his strength, full of wisdom; and the grace of God rested upon him. Every year, his parents used to go up to Jerusalem at the paschal feast. And when he was twelve years old, after going up to Jerusalem, as the custom was at the time of the feast, and completing the days of its observance, they set about their return home. But the boy Jesus, unknown to his parents, continued his stay in Jerusalem. And they, thinking that he was among their travelling companions, had gone a whole day's journey before they made enquiry for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances. When they could not find him, they made their way back to Jerusalem in search of him, and it was only after three



lehem. He seems not to have known which house the Holy Family lived in; most likely, then, the star which had shone over the house for the wise men had not been seen by anyone else. This is quite reasonable; the wise men would have made the journey to Bethlehem in daylight.

Herod allowed a safe margin in the age limit of the boys to be killed; it would be difficult for soldiers to judge the exact age of a child. Also, he could not be sure that the wise men had given him accurate information. With a population of 1,000, the number of boys killed at Bethlehem would be about thirty.

Joseph was in Egypt only about two months when God recalled him. He intended going back to his home in Bethlehem, but on arrival at the frontier he learned that Archelaus had just killed 3,000 people in Jerusalem for an attempted rebellion. Jesus would not be safe in the territory of a king who had inherited his father's cruelty. The other sons, Antipas and Philip, were more humane; so his thoughts turned to Nazareth, where Mary's people lived; it was in Antipas' territory. Avoiding Jerusalem, the Holy Family made their way up the coastal plain of Sharon, through country once famous for Samson's exploits against the Philistines. Our Lord was still a baby in arms (he was scarcely six months old) when the Holy Family came back to Nazareth, where he was to live for thirty years.

### **Jerusalem April 9 A.D.**

God himself was living in Nazareth, but none knew except Mary and Joseph. It was not that he lived in isolation, but that he hid his divine nature. He lived the ordinary life of a boy, eating and sleeping, growing and working, playing and going to school with his five cousins, James, Jude, Simon, Joseph, and Matthew. His human nature had to develop like that of other men; although he knew all things as God, he learnt them all over again as man; he really did learn gradually, and did not pretend to do so.

So human was he that we might forget he was God; so the only story recorded of his boyhood is a reminder of his divinity. When Mary and Joseph arrived in Jerusalem on the second day,



days that they found him. He was sitting in the temple, in the midst of those who taught there, listening to them and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were in amazement at his quick understanding and at the answers he gave. Seeing him there, they were full of wonder, and his mother said to him, 'My Son, why have you treated us so? Think, what anguish of mind your father and I have endured, searching for you.'

But he asked them, 'What reason had you to search for me? Could you not tell that I must needs be in the place which belongs to my Father?'

These words which he spoke to them were beyond their understanding; but he went down with them on their journey to Nazareth, and lived there in subjection to them, while his mother kept in her heart the memory of all this. And so Jesus advanced in wisdom with the years, and in favour both with God and with men.



they would enquire first at the place where they had been staying during the feast (probably Lazarus' house in Bethany; later incidents in the gospels show that this family were his lifelong friends, p. 47). They continued their search with growing anxiety; night came and still they had not found him. They thought of him looking for them with the same anxiety; when they found him next morning, in the court of the Gentiles, quite unconcerned, they were puzzled and hurt. So used were they to thinking of him as their boy, that he had to remind them that he was their God; Joseph is not his father, God is. His true home is the house that belongs to his Father, not Joseph's workshop in Nazareth.

We have no more details of his life for the next twenty years. St. Joseph died during this time; Jesus then worked to support himself and his mother. All his human characteristics came from her; not only his physical appearance, but his manner of speech; the graciousness and tenderness which he shows in later life came from daily, intimate life with his mother. The rest of us receive much from both father and mother; this child alone of all mankind was the son of his mother.



## Chapter 2: John the Baptist



A PHRASE that needs explaining is the *kingdom of heaven*. Like John the Baptist, who first uses it in the gospels, it is a link between the Old Testament and the New. It is the Jewish expression for what we now call *the Church*, God's chosen organization for the salvation of the world. 'Heaven' is a reverential way the Jews had of referring to God; so it is God's kingdom, or his rule over men on this earth. It is used 120 times in the gospels, whereas *Church* is used only twice (pp. 168, 182).

Another thing to notice is the way our Lord speaks of himself as *the Son of Man*; this he does 80 times in the gospels. In his own language, Aramaic, it is *Bar Nasha* (the accent on the last syllable). By this title he emphasizes his human nature; he is a brother of ours. He avoided using *Messias* and *Son of David*, which were the usual Jewish titles for the Redeemer. He acted in this way because the Jews had false ideas about the *Messias* and his kingdom. Owing to the harsh treatment they had received from the Gentiles (especially the Greeks and Romans in the past two hundred years), they were looking for a victorious king to trample the heathen underfoot; they were thinking in terms of war. Our Lord had to bring them back to the true idea of a universal kingdom, and of a leader who would free them from the tyranny of sin, not of Rome. Our Lord wanted time for his teaching to influence their minds, and for the attractiveness of his personality to capture their hearts and wills. It was to be a slow, gradual growth of faith in his person and his message.

Our Lord was not only the *Messias*, he was God as well. But here, too, he made no open declaration, not even to his apostles. The characteristic belief distinguishing the Jews from their idolatrous neighbours was their monotheism: one true God, not many. Since they had never heard of the Blessed Trinity, a claim to divinity by Jesus would have meant for them two Gods. The shock to the Jewish mind of such a claim would have been terrific. So, our Lord revealed his divine nature only gradually, and with proofs of his divine power.



## John Preaches Repentance

It was in the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius' reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, when Herod was prince in Galilee, his brother Philip in the Iturean and Trachonitid region, and Lysanias in Abilina, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiphas, that the word of God came upon John, the son of Zachary, in the wilderness of Judea; 'Repent,' he said, 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' And he went all over the country round Jordan, announcing a baptism whereby men repented, to have their sins forgiven; as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaias, "There is a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, straighten out his paths. Every valley is to be bridged, and every mountain and hill levelled, and the windings are to be cut straight and the rough paths made into smooth roads, and all mankind is to see the saving power of God."'

And he, John, wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins, and locusts and wild honey were his food. Thereupon Jerusalem and all Judea, and all those who dwelt round Jordan, went out to see him, and he baptized them in the river Jordan, while they confessed their sins. Many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to his baptizing; and when he saw these, he asked them, 'Who was it that taught you, brood of vipers, to flee from the vengeance that draws near? Come, then, yield the acceptable fruit of repentance; do not presume to say in your hearts, "We have Abraham for our father"; I tell you, God has power to raise up children to Abraham out of these very stones. Already the axe has been put to the root of the trees, so that every tree which does not show good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire.'

And the crowds asked him, 'What is it, then, we are to do?'



**River Jordan (October 27 A.D.).**

The valley of the Jordan River is a mighty gash in the surface of the earth, a thousand feet below sea level. This fast-flowing stream, about thirty yards wide, wanders three times the direct distance of its sixty-five miles from the lake of Galilee to the Dead Sea. The valley is about ten miles wide, with high barren hills on both sides, rising up to three thousand feet from the valley floor. It was the wild setting for the dramatic entrance into public life of John, who had been waiting for more than thirty years for his call from God. He had but one purpose to prepare the Jewish people for the coming of the Messiah to reign over them. It was a call to repentance, not to revolt; the enemy to be conquered was sin, not the mighty power of their foreign ruler, Rome. As a proof of their sorrow for sin, they submitted to a ceremonial immersion in the waters of the Jordan (this was not the sacrament of Baptism). The Jews were familiar with similar rituals as a purification before numerous religious functions.

It was winter when John appeared from his solitude. But the Jordan valley has a mild summer temperature even in the coldest months; the crowds attracted by John's preaching could live out in the open without any hardship. The news that the long silence of the Lord had been broken caused a thrill throughout the whole land; no prophet had spoken in Israel since the time of Malachi, four hundred years before. John's dress and ascetic way of life proclaimed him an authentic prophet like Elias, who had been taken up in a fiery chariot from the banks of the Jordan eight hundred years before. When he spoke burning words, vivid and direct, they crowded round him; they were touched by God's grace, and made public demonstration of their sorrow for their sins. John then explained the essential condition for membership in the Messianic kingdom: there must be a change of heart, a reform of life corresponding to this outward show of sorrow.

With stinging words he rebukes the leaders; they are instruments of death to the people to whom they should bring life; and worst of all, the people do not suspect it; they are hidden enemies,



He answered them, 'The man who has two coats must share with the man who has none; and the man who has food to eat, must do the like.'

The publicans, too, came to be baptized; 'Master,' they said to him, 'what are we to do?'

He told them, 'Do not go beyond the scale appointed you.'

Even the soldiers on guard asked him, 'What of us? What are we to do?'

He said to them, 'Do not use men roughly, do not lay false information against them; be content with your pay.'

And now the people was full of expectation; all had the same surmise in their hearts, whether John might not be the Christ. But John gave them their answer by saying publicly, 'As for me, I am baptizing you with water, for your repentance; but one is yet to come who is mightier than I, so that I am not worthy to bend down and untie the strap of his shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He holds his winnowing-fan ready, to purge his threshing-floor clean; he will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will consume with fire that can never be quenched.'

With these and many other warnings he gave his message to the people.

### **Jesus is Baptized by John**

At this time, Jesus came from Nazareth and stood before John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have restrained him; 'It is I,' he said, 'that ought to be baptized by you, and do you come to me instead?'

But Jesus answered, 'Let it be so for the present; it is well that we should thus fulfil all due observance.'

Then John gave way to him. So Jesus was baptized, and came straight up out of the water, and stood there



like snakes. They thought that because they were Jews God could not disown them; that their descent from Abraham made them automatically members of the Messianic Kingdom. 'Birth is of no avail,' says John; 'you must humble your pride, and show proof of your reformed lives, to escape God's anger.'

He is gentler with the rest of his penitents: charity is the fundamental virtue for all; it must be real charity, charity in action, not just a sham. The tax-gatherers ('publicans') and their police force ('soldiers') were greatly tempted to extortion, violence and theft; John goes direct to the root of their trouble; the virtue they must practise is justice (see p. 294).

John had now become a national figure, a dynamic reformer discussed in every corner of the land. Was he the Messiah? But John knew his mission; bluntly, and with great humility, he turned their thoughts to the Saviour: 'Just as fire is a more perfect purifying agent than water, so his manner of cleansing will be far superior to mine,' said John. (Fire is used here only as a metaphor: it expresses the deep, intimate effect of the Holy Ghost in the soul.) The imagery of fire reminds John to warn them of the necessity of reform in order to escape the anger of God. The Jews thought that God's punishment was reserved only for the heathen, and that they as Jews would all become members of the kingdom. 'That is not so,' said John: 'God accepts only the good grain; the worthless chaff will burn eternally.'

### **River Jordan 6 January 28 A.D.**

John did not know yet that Jesus was the Messiah: it was only after Jesus' baptism that this was revealed to him (p. 40). He did, however, recognize Jesus as his cousin. At the time of the Visitation, Jesus had cleansed John from original sin. Jesus was not only a man of great holiness of life, he was also divine. It was not for him that this baptism, which was for sinners, was intended. But our Lord as a Jew wished to submit (as he did to circumcision) to all the means provided for the sanctification of men ('all



praying. Suddenly heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit came down upon him in bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, which said, 'You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased.'

Jesus himself had now reached the age of about thirty. He was, by repute, the son of Joseph, son of Heli, son of Mathat, son of Levi, son of Melchi, son of Janne, son of Joseph, son of Matthathias, son of Amos, son of Nahum, son of Hesli, son of Nagge, son of Mahath, son of Matthathias, son of Semei, son of Joseph, son of Juda, son of Joanna, son of Resa, son of Zorobabel, son of Salathiel, son of Neri, son of Melchi, son of Addi, son of Cosam, son of Elmadam, son of Her, son of Jesus, son of Eliezer, son of Jorim, son of Mathat, son of Levi, son of Simeon, son of Juda, son of Joseph, son of Jona, son of Eliakim, son of Melea, son of Menna, son of Matthatha, son of Nathan, son of David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, son of Booz, son of Salmon, son of Naasson, son of Aminadab, son of Admin, son of Arni, son of Esrom, son of Phares, son of Juda, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, son of Thare, son of Nachor, son of Sarug, son of Ragau, son of Phaleg, son of Heber, son of Sale, son of Cainan, son of Arphaxad, son of Sem, son of Noah, son of Lamech, son of Methusala, son of Henoah, son of Jared, son of Malaleel, son of Cainan, son of Henos, son of Seth, son of Adam, who was the son of God.

### **The Devil Tempts Jesus**

Jesus returned from the Jordan full of the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit he was led on into the wilderness, where he remained forty days, tempted by the devil. There he lodged with the beasts; during those forty days and forty nights he ate nothing, and when they were over, he was hungry.

Then the tempter approached, and said to him, 'If you



due observance'). The heavenly vision was seen by Jesus, John, and probably some of the bystanders; it was the signal from the Father and the Holy Ghost to Jesus, the Son, to begin his work of restoring mankind to the friendship of God.

John had been at work for a few months before our Lord came for baptism; it would now be early in 28 A.D. (January 6 is the liturgical date.) If Jesus was born in 5 B.C. he would now be thirty-one years old. Jewish interpretation of a text of scripture (Numbers 4, 3) prohibited any public teaching before the age of thirty; Jesus had fulfilled this condition, since he was now in his thirties. St. Luke uses 'about thirty' as a technical term; he could have given his exact age if he so desired.

The baptism of our Lord marks the official beginning of his public ministry. It is such an important event that St. Luke gives his genealogy here (St. Matthew gave his at the time of his birth, p. 14). It shows how fitted Jesus was for the redemption of all men; he, too, is a descendant of Adam, like all of us. He is the mediator, the link between fallen humanity and God. To set the plan of redemption in motion, and also to give Jesus, as Man, the power and strength to carry out his tremendous task, both Father and Holy Ghost give divine grace at his baptism.

The dove over the water is a reminiscence of the beginning of the creation of the world, 'Over its waters brooded the Spirit of God' (Genesis 1, 2); a new creation of supernatural life now begins through the waters of Baptism (it is generally held that our Lord instituted this sacrament at his own baptism).

### Mount Quarantal Jan.-Feb. 28 A.D.

The barren, mountainous wasteland west of Jericho is the traditional site of the forty days' fast; it is now called Mount Quarantal. Since the fall of Adam, Satan and his kingdom of sin had reigned over the world; Christ came to destroy Satan's power, and establish the kingdom of God. The official opening of the campaign was his baptism in the Jordan, near Jericho; the devil reacted quickly to this threat to his dominion over men. He



are the Son of God, bid these stones turn into loaves of bread.'

He answered, 'It is written, "Man cannot live by bread only; there is life for him in all the words which proceed from the mouth of God." '

Next the devil took him into the holy city, Jerusalem, and there set him down on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down from this to the earth; for it is written, "He shall give his angels charge concerning you, to keep you safe, and they will hold you up with their hands, lest you should chance to trip on a stone." '

Jesus said to him, 'But it is further written, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the proof." '

Once more the devil took him to the top of an exceedingly high mountain, from which he showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time; 'I will give you command,' the devil said to him, 'over all these, and the glory that belongs to them; they have been made over to me, and I may give them to whomsoever I please; come then, all shall be yours, if you will fall down before me and worship.'

Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan; it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve none but him." '

So the devil, when he had finished tempting him every way, left him in peace until the time should come; and thereupon angels came and ministered to him.

### **John the Evangelist's Prologue**

At the beginning of time the Word already was; and God had the Word abiding with him, and the Word was God. He abode, at the beginning of time, with God. It was through him that all things came into being, and without him came nothing that has come to be. In him there was life, and that life was the light of men. And the



did not know that Jesus was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; but he had heard the voice of the Father, at his baptism, calling him 'my beloved Son'; he had heard John proclaiming the nearness of the kingdom; he knew Jesus' holiness, and was aware of the supernatural events at the time of his birth. He was undoubtedly the most formidable opponent yet encountered. He must, then, find out just what the title 'Son of God' implied, and if possible entice him away from his close union with God.

In the first two temptations the devil acts on the presumption that Jesus is the Son of God; in the third, that he is not. Jesus is concerned that Satan shall not find out his divine nature; the more in the dark the devil is, the less damage he can do. So it is really a battle of wits. Jesus confounds him on each occasion by quoting scripture (each time from Deuteronomy). He makes no use of miraculous power; he acts just as any man tempted by the devil should and could act. In this he gives us an example of how to repel the attacks of Satan. His victory here foreshadows the final defeat of sin by his death on the cross. Satan makes no more attacks on him until the final battle of the Passion.

The first temptation is based on the similarity of stones to loaves of bread; the second suggests the marvellous, dramatic arrival of the Messiah, so commonly pictured by the Jews; the third would make his passion and death unnecessary. For the last two temptations, our Lord need not have been transported through the air by Satan; they could have walked together to Jerusalem, and back to mount Quarantal (the 'high mountain') as though they were two ordinary human travellers. This is the only scene in the gospels not witnessed by human beings.

## God Became a Mortal Man

This is the beginning of St. John's gospel, familiar to all as the last gospel at Mass. There is a simplicity and sublimity about St. John, so different from the other evangelists; his writing is more like a meditation, or the reminiscences of an old man (he wrote about sixty years after the events narrated) on the greatest



light shines in darkness, a darkness which was not able to master it.

A man appeared, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, so that through him all men might learn to believe. He was not the Light; he was sent to bear witness to the light. There is one who enlightens every soul born into the world; he was the true Light. He, through whom the world was made, was in the world, and the world treated him as a stranger. He came to what was his own, and they who were his own gave him no welcome. But all those who did welcome him he empowered to become the children of God, all those who believe in his name; their birth came, not from human stock, not from nature's will or man's, but from God. And the Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us; and we had sight of his glory, glory such as belongs to the Father's only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. We have John's witness to him; 'I told you,' cried John, 'there was one coming after me who takes rank before me; he was when I was not.' We have all received something out of his abundance, grace answering grace. Through Moses the law was given to us: through Jesus Christ grace came to us, and truth. No man has ever seen God; but now God, the only-begotten who abides in the bosom of the Father, has himself become our interpreter.

### **Jewish Leaders Question John**

This, then, was the testimony which John bore, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, 'Who are you?' He admitted the truth, without concealment; admitted that he was not the Christ.

'What then,' they asked him, 'are you Elias?'

'Not Elias,' he said.

'Are you the prophet?'

And he answered, 'No.'



thing that ever happened, the Incarnation. The synoptists write of Jesus as a man on earth, John soars like an eagle to where the Son dwells with the Father from all eternity. He uses a special title for the Son; it is 'the Word': 'the radiance of his Father's splendour, and the full expression of his being' (Hebrews 1, 3).

The mention of 'John' (the Baptist; he never speaks of himself by name), shows that the evangelist is thinking of the time when he first met Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry, not his infancy. He visualizes the Incarnation right from the words, 'and the light shines in darkness'; it is only in the first few lines that he is considering the Second Person of the Trinity before the Incarnation. Consequently he is not introducing a new fact when he writes, 'and the Word was made flesh.' St. John here deals in dramatic contrasts, not in logical sequence.

His main contrast is the eternal godhead of the Word (his opening sentence), and his becoming man in time ('the Word was made flesh'). The mighty effect of the Incarnation (a divine Person, having a human as well as a divine nature) is expressed by these two ideas: light (or truth), and life (or grace). The first affects man's mind: man can know God as never before; he now possesses our human nature, and speaks our language. The second affects man's will: he is given a new vitality, the power to live in friendship and union with God through Jesus Christ. This is the supernatural life, a free gift of God only to those who believe in him; faith, not Jewish descent, is the necessary qualification.

### **Bethany Beyond Jordan March 28 A.D.**

Early in March the snow thaws on mount Hermon to the north of the lake of Galilee, and the Jordan is in flood. John the Baptist moved away from the river a few hundred yards to a smaller rainfed stream, to continue his baptizing in safety. There was a small village nearby, called Bethany (a distinct place from Bethany on mount Olivet). Here the delegation from the Jewish leaders found him. 'Priests and Levites' represented the Sadducees; they were the official rulers of the people, whereas the



So they said, 'Tell us who you are, that we may give an answer to those who sent us; what account do you give of yourself?'

And he told them, 'I am what the prophet Isaias spoke of, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Straighten out the way of the Lord."'

Some of the Pharisees, too, had been sent; they asked him, 'Why do you baptize, then, if you yourself are not the Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet?'

John answered them, 'I am baptizing you with water; but there is one standing in your midst of whom you know nothing. Though he comes after me, I am not worthy to untie the strap of his shoes.'

All this happened in Bethany that is beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

### **John Points Out Jesus to His Disciples**

Next day, John saw Jesus coming towards him; and he said, 'Look, this is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is of him that I said, "One is coming after me who takes rank before me; he was when I was not." I myself did not know who he was, although the very reason why I have come, with my baptism of water, is to make him known to Israel.'

John also bore witness thus, 'I saw the Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove, and resting upon him. Till then, I did not know him; but then I remembered what I had been told by the God who sent me to baptize with water. He told me, "The man who will baptize with the Holy Spirit is the man on whom you will see the Spirit come down and rest." Now I have seen him, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.'

### **Jesus Chooses Five Disciples**

The next day after this, John was standing there again, with two of his disciples; and, watching Jesus as he walked



Pharisees were the intellectual leaders. These latter were teachers, and interpreters of the Jewish way of life, the Mosaic law. Both parties resented John's popularity and influence; they were the accepted masters, he a mere upstart. Also, he had shown no respect for their position, even calling them 'a brood of vipers' (p. 30).

So now they were seeking information from his own lips to enable them to work up a case against him. John's life of solitude had made him sparing of words; he is abrupt with them. He goes straight to the point: the popular opinion, that he is the Messiah, is false. He is not Elias come back to earth (Elias had been taken up in a fiery chariot from this place in 850 B.C.), nor is he the prophet foretold by Moses (actually this was the Messiah, though John's questioners seem unaware of it). His work is to prepare the way for, and point out, the Messiah; if they were genuine seekers, they would be able to recognize him.

### **A Lamb the Symbol of Innocence**

Our Lord returns to the Jordan after his forty days' fast in the wilderness. John is on the lookout for his return, and immediately points him out to his inner circle of trusted followers (he withheld this information from the evilly-intentioned delegation of the previous day). A lamb is the symbol of innocence; Jesus was sinless, and had made no confession of sins at his baptism, yet it was he that would redeem sinful mankind. (Possibly John also had in mind the paschal lamb, Exodus 12, and the picture of the suffering Messiah from Isaiah 53.)

He also repeats, for his disciples' benefit, the vision he had of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism, two months before. He, of course, was acquainted with his cousin Jesus; they would meet each year at the religious festivals, especially the paschal feast. But the baptism was the occasion when God made known to John that Jesus was the Messiah, and also his divine Son.

Our Lord had not only to redeem mankind by his death; he had to establish his church, through which salvation was to be



by, he said, 'Look, this is the Lamb of God.'

The two disciples heard him say it, and they followed Jesus. Turning, and seeing them follow him, Jesus asked, 'What would you have of me?'

'Rabbi,' they said (a word which means Master), 'where do you live?'

He said to them, 'Come and you shall see'; so they went and saw where he lived, and they stayed with him all the rest of the day, from about four o'clock onwards.

One of the two who had heard what John said, and followed him, was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He, first of all, found his own brother Simon, and told him, 'We have discovered the Messias' (which means, the Christ), and brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him closely, and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Kephas' (which means the same as Peter).

He was to remove into Galilee next day; and now he found Philip; to him Jesus said, 'Follow me.' This Philip came from Bethsaida, a fellow townsman of Andrew and Peter.

And Philip found Nathanael, and told him, 'We have discovered who it was Moses wrote of in his law, and the prophets too; it is Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth.'

When Nathanael asked him, 'Can anything that is good come from Nazareth?' Philip said, 'Come and see.'

Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, and said to him, 'Here comes one who belongs to the true Israel; there is no falsehood in him.'

'How do you know me?' Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered him, 'I saw you when you were under the fig-tree, before Philip called you.'

Then Nathanael answered him, 'You, Master, are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.'



brought to all men. The foundation members are these five disciples; eventually there will be twelve (p. 82).

The devoted John the Baptist, true to his mission, turned the thoughts of some of his disciples to Jesus. Interested by John's devotion, and attracted by the personality of Jesus, they made the first move. Our Lord won them over completely. The story is told by St. John (Andrew's unnamed companion), who recalls this great event of his life with vivid detail. Jesus was probably living in a temporary shelter made of willow branches; there he invited the two disciples, after they had indicated that they wished for a longer talk than a mere casual conversation. They probably stayed the night with him, and next day Andrew went off enthusiastically to share the good news with his brother. This third disciple receives special attention from Jesus: a new name is promised him (formally bestowed when the twelve apostles are finally selected in Galilee three months later), showing his future destiny and his acceptance by Christ. He now belongs entirely to him, as the rock on which his church is to be built.

The enthusiasm and excitement of these men is clear in every line. The long-expected Messias had come at last, and he had deigned to make them his intimate friends. More than that, he had a charm and depth of mind beyond anyone they had ever known. He was a Galilean, too, just like themselves. They were walking on air, as they marched north in a group towards Galilee.

In the shade of a fig-tree, Philip catches up with another disciple of John the Baptist, returning home to Cana for a wedding. Breathlessly he tells him the good news; but Nathanael (the apostle Bartholomew) is skeptical. His sudden change on meeting Jesus is all the more remarkable; he accepts him completely. He must have been doing some deep thinking under that fig-tree; maybe asking for a sign of the coming of the Messias. Our Lord corrects his exaggerated enthusiasm; Bartholomew, and the others too, did not yet realize that Jesus was God incarnate.

The faith of all of them is to be built on more solid founda-



Jesus answered, 'What, believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig-tree? You shall see greater things than that.' And he said to him, 'Believe me when I tell you this; all of you will see heaven opening, and the angels of God going up and coming down upon the Son of Man.'

### **Jesus Works His First Miracle**

Two days afterwards, there was a wedding-feast at Cana, in Galilee; and Jesus' mother was there. Jesus himself, and his disciples, had also been invited to the wedding. Here the supply of wine failed; whereupon Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no wine left.'

Jesus answered her, 'Nay, woman, why do you trouble me with that? My time has not come yet.'

And his mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'

There were six water-pots standing there, as the Jewish custom of ceremonial washing demanded; they were of stone, and held twenty or thirty gallons apiece. And when Jesus said, 'Fill up the water-pots with water,' they filled these up to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Now draw, and give a draught to the master of the feast.'

So they gave it to him; and the master of the feast tasted this water, which had now been turned into wine. He did not know whence it came; only the servants who had drawn the water knew that. The master of the feast, then, called to the bridegroom, and said to him, 'It is ever the good wine that men set out first, and the worse kind only when all have drunk deep; you have kept the good wine till now.'

So, in Cana of Galilee, Jesus began his miracles, and made known the glory that was his, so that his disciples learned to believe in him.

### **The Cleansing of the Temple**

After this he went down to Capharnaum with his mother, his brethren, and his disciples, not staying there many days.



tions than that; they will have continuous proof of Jesus' divine power during the next two years; he is to bridge heaven and earth by his miracles. This is picturesquely represented by the vision of angels, as a sign of God's protection, given long ago to Jacob at Bethel, a village in the hills, a few miles to the west.

### **Cana in Galilee March 28 A.D.**

The disciples had not to wait long for the first proof that heaven was open to his command. In this, his first miracle, he anticipated by two months the time (the imprisonment of John) for showing his divine power. It was really Mary's miracle; just as her consent was needed for him to begin his life as Man, so the Father ordained that it was through the mediation of his mother that Jesus was to begin this new stage of his life. This seems to be the simplest way to explain our Lord's words to his mother: he was waiting, as an obedient Son, for his Father's will to be expressed through Mary his mother.

Mary was either a relative or a close friend of the bridal couple; she is completely at home in the house. (Cana is only five miles distant from Nazareth.) Weddings among Jews were celebrated for a week or more; guests, and most of the villagers, dropped in to congratulate the newly-married, and to present their gifts. The men would congregate in the shady courtyard; the women inside the house. Several days had passed before this incident took place. Our Lady noticed the embarrassing situation, and thereupon approached Jesus in the courtyard with his disciples; she was accompanied by some of the servants, who, with the five disciples, were the only witnesses of the conversation and miracle. Seemingly the contents of all six water-pots (about 150 gallons) were changed into wine; it was a delayed wedding present from Jesus and his five disciples. Later he was to make an even greater change; at the Last Supper he would change wine into his own blood (p. 350).

### **Jerusalem Paschal Feast 28 A.D.**

The paschal feast began on Tuesday, 30 March, in 28 A.D. The family group from Nazareth ('his brethren') first went down



And now the paschal feast which the Jews keep was drawing near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And in the temple there he found the merchants selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting at their trade. So he made a kind of whip out of cords, and drove them all, with their sheep and oxen, out of the temple, spilling the bankers' coins and overthrowing their tables, and the chairs of the pigeon-sellers; and he said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take these away, do not turn my Father's house into a place of barter'; nor would he allow anyone to carry his wares through the temple. And this was the admonition he gave them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be known among all the nations for a house of prayer"? Whereas you have made it into a den of thieves.' And his disciples remembered how it is written, 'I am consumed with jealousy for the honour of your house.'

Then the Jews answered him, 'What sign can you show us as your warrant for doing this?'

Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again.'

At which the Jews said, 'This temple took forty-six years to build; will you raise it up in three days?'

But the temple he was speaking of was his own body; and when he had risen from the dead his disciples remembered his saying this, and learned to believe in the scriptures, and in the words Jesus had spoken.

### **Nicodemus Visits Jesus by Night**

At this paschal season, while he was in Jerusalem for the feast, there were many who came to believe in his name, upon seeing the miracles which he did. But Jesus would not give them his confidence; he had knowledge of them all, and did not need assurances about any man, because he could read men's hearts.

Now there was a man called Nicodemus, a Pharisee,



to Capernaum to collect the four fishermen disciples there; then all proceeded down the Jordan valley to avoid hostile Samaria, and because of the mild nights for camping out.

The outer court of the temple, the court of the Gentiles, was a legitimate place of trade; animals and birds, certified as sacrificially clean by the priests, were sold there; foreign currency was changed into Jewish money for the payment of the temple tax. What angered our Lord was not that such business was being carried on, but that the uproar of bargaining, and the swindling by the priests (one had to buy their animals at an exorbitant price; they would certify no others), had completely obscured the real purpose of God's house: to honour and worship him.

The disciples see a new Jesus here: he acts with sternness and authority; men run in panic from his flashing eye and upraised hand. It is the anger of the Son whose Father has been insulted. The rulers of the temple-worship are soon summoned to deal with this unexpected situation; with some show of deference they ask for his credentials. His reply is to appeal to the principal proof both of his authority and his mission: his resurrection from the dead. His body is God's dwelling ('temple') in a far deeper sense than the temple of wood and stone in which they are standing. These words are to be remembered and quoted against him, when two years later they try him for his life (p. 384).

I have assumed this to be the only cleansing of the temple. Matthew, Mark, and Luke place it in Holy Week (p. 305), because that is the first time Jesus comes to Jerusalem in their gospels.

### **Bethany on Mount Olivet April 28 A.D.**

Our Lord was accustomed to stay at Bethany, on the eastern slope of mount Olivet, during his visits to Jerusalem. Later we find him very much at home in the house of Lazarus and his two sisters (pp. 222, 280-284); it is quite likely that this friendship dates from childhood days. There, then, Nicodemus came, under cover of darkness. The interview is only briefly summarized here; it probably went on for several hours, the dim light



and one of the rulers of the Jews, who came to see Jesus by night; 'Master,' he said to him, 'we know that you have come from God to teach us; no one, unless God were with him, could do the miracles which you do.'

Jesus answered him, 'Believe me when I tell you this; a man cannot see the kingdom of God without being born anew.'

'Why,' Nicodemus asked him, 'how is it possible that a man should be born when he is already old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and so come to birth?'

Jesus answered, 'Believe me, no man can enter into the kingdom of God unless birth comes to him from water, and from the Spirit. What is born by natural birth is a thing of nature, what is born by spiritual birth is a thing of spirit. Do not be surprised, then, at my telling you, "You must be born anew." The wind breathes where it will, and you can hear the sound of it, but know nothing of the way it came or the way it goes; so it is, when a man is born by the breath of the Spirit.'

Nicodemus answered him, 'How can such things come to be?'

'What,' answered Jesus, 'can such things be strange to you who are one of the teachers of Israel? Believe me, we speak of what is known to us, and testify of what our eyes have seen, and still you will not accept our testimony. You cannot trust me when I tell you of what passes on earth; how will you be able to trust me when I tell you of what passes in heaven? No man has ever gone up into heaven; but there is one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man, who dwells in heaven. And this Son of Man must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness; so that those who believe in him may have eternal life.'



of an oil lamp playing on the face of the Master and this learned stranger.

It was a discussion of profound mysteries (compare the talk with the Samaritan woman, p. 56) that left a lasting impression on Nicodemus; on a later occasion he will speak up on behalf of Jesus (p. 196), and eventually assist at his burial (p. 404). At this time Nicodemus was prepared to accept Jesus as a prophet, because of his miracles (not recorded in the gospels); a few minor changes in his beliefs and practices, so he thought, and he would be ready to join this prophet in establishing his kingdom. His Jewish blood gave him membership; it was merely a matter of discussing and clarifying a few points of doctrine.

Jesus cut right across this line of thought by stating that his kingdom was not only a change in a man's way of life; it was a completely new life brought to man by the power of God (that is how Nicodemus would have thought of 'Spirit'; he could not have understood the reference to the Holy Spirit, not yet knowing of the Blessed Trinity). This supernatural life of grace could be entered upon only through the sacrament of Baptism. This was entirely different from John's baptism (Nicodemus certainly knew of John's teaching, and the meaning of his baptism); it was a spiritual rebirth, not just a symbolic cleansing.

The transformation caused by the Holy Spirit deep in the soul, though invisible, is none the less real. It is a mystery of the supernatural order, like the action of wind in nature (there is a play on 'spirit' and 'wind,' both being represented by the same word in Hebrew and Greek). Our Lord claims to speak as one who knows; his natural home is heaven; all its mysteries are open to his gaze. How could he make such statements unless he was God? Nicodemus must have faith in him. There are yet many greater heavenly mysteries to be revealed (such as the Blessed Trinity). Baptism is only the first step on the way to salvation. But before it is efficacious, Jesus must die so that men can live. The kind of death is indicated by the phrase 'lifted up'; it is a technical but descriptive word for crucifixion.



### Reflections of John the Evangelist

God so loved the world, that he gave up his only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life. When God sent his Son into the world, it was not to reject the world, but so that the world might find salvation through him. For the man who believes in him, there is no rejection; the man who does not believe is already rejected; he has not found faith in the name of God's only-begotten Son. Rejection lies in this, that when the light came into the world men preferred darkness to light; preferred it, because their doings were evil. Anyone who acts shamefully hates the light, will not come into the light, for fear that his doings will be found out. Whereas the man whose life is true comes to the light, so that his deeds may be seen for what they are, deeds done in God.

### John the Baptist Makes Way for Jesus

After this, Jesus and his disciples came into the Judean countryside, and there he remained with them, baptizing. John was still baptizing, too, in Aenon, near Salim, where there was abundance of water; men went out to him there to be baptized. (It was only later that John was thrown into prison.) John's disciples had had a dispute with a Jew, about purification, and now they came to John, and told him, 'Master, there was one with you on the other side of Jordan, to whom you then bore testimony. We find that he is baptizing now, and all are flocking to him.'

John answered, 'A man must be content to receive the gift which is given him from heaven, and nothing more. You yourselves are my witnesses that I told you, "I am not the Christ; I have been sent to go before him." The bride is for the bridegroom; but the bridegroom's friend, who stands by and listens to him, rejoices too, rejoices at hearing the bridegroom's voice; and this joy is mine now



### **Faith in Jesus Essential to Salvation**

St. John the evangelist, looking back on this scene, adds his own reflections, the fruit of long years of meditation. Our Lord spoke of his death on the cross under the figure of the serpent of bronze, 'bringing life to all who should look towards it, as they lay wounded' (Numbers 21, 8). This starts a train of thought for John: the death of Jesus bringing life to all men (not to Jews only). The memory of Nicodemus coming out of the night to find the true Light recalls his favorite image, the coming of Christ as light into a darkened world. The Jewish leaders were opposed to Jesus from the very beginning, because they were arrogantly proud of their exalted status; they were not willing to learn. Their rigid nationalism would not permit them to understand the universality of his kingdom. Faith in Jesus is the only way salvation can come to men. Nicodemus alone of all the Jewish leaders showed the right dispositions to accept the Messias.

### **Aenon in Jordan Valley April 28 A.D.**

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had rejected Jesus on his first appearance among them; so he went once more to the Jordan valley near Jericho. There he remained during the month of April. More disciples joined him from the ranks of John the Baptist; probably all his future apostles, except Matthew, were with him at this time. It was a kind of rehearsal, a try-out, before the opening of his public ministry in Galilee. His disciples, like John's, practised the rite of baptism (not the sacrament yet). John himself was still baptizing, but higher up the river near the lake of Galilee. The two groups were in contact with each other through the crowds passing back and forth.

A certain Jew openly professed his preference for Jesus' baptism in the presence of John's disciples. These showed hostility to Jesus, and jealousy of his popularity, mainly through loyalty to John. But there was greatness combined with humility in John; he understood his mission perfectly: to prepare the way for and lead men to Christ. There was no sadness or bitterness in him. With a song of joy and gladness he welcomed the coming of his



in full measure. He must become more and more, I must become less and less.'

### **Reflections of John the Evangelist**

He who comes from above is above all men's reach; the man who belongs to earth talks the language of earth, but one who comes from heaven must needs be beyond the reach of all; he bears witness of things he has seen and heard, and nobody accepts his witness. The man who does accept his witness has declared, once for all, that God cannot lie, since the words spoken by him whom God has sent are God's own words; so boundless is the gift God makes of his Spirit. The Father loves his Son, and so has given everything into his hands; and he who believes in the Son possesses eternal life, whereas he who refuses to believe in the Son will never see life; God's displeasure hangs over him continually.



**Master;** the bride (the church-kingdom) belongs to Jesus, his own work was to make ready for the marriage.

### **The Divine Origin of Jesus**

St. John the evangelist here gives another meditation on our Lord. Moved by the words of his old master, John the Baptist, he is amazed that all men have not understood the supreme dignity of Jesus. He contrasts him with all other prophets; their origin is human; they spoke only what God made known to them. Jesus came from heaven itself; his origin is divine; he has no need to be told what to say, since he knows all the divine secrets of himself. There is no partial giving of the Spirit; Jesus possesses the completeness of God's grace. He is supreme in God's plan of salvation; faith in him is the only way to eternal life. To refuse obedience to him is to reject God. St. John is sadly thinking of his own people, and their punishment for the rejection of Jesus (Jerusalem had been destroyed when John wrote).



## *Chapter 3:* The Twelve Apostles



**THE** next five chapters are a closely knit unit; they are the Galilean ministry of Jesus. They are full of crowds and miracles. The miracles fall into two classes: healing of the sick, and casting out devils. Although he worked many miracles, only thirty of them are described with any detail in the gospels. (As a memory aid there are thirty parables; our Lord was 'about thirty' when he began his public ministry; he died in 30 A.D.)

Despite the danger of arousing the Messianic ambitions of the crowds in Galilee, our Lord did not stop working miracles (he tried to keep down enthusiasm by commanding silence). They were forced from him through his charity; they were daily proof of his loving care for suffering humanity and his battle against the forces of evil. They were evidence enough, for thinking men, both of his divine power and his spiritual mission.

But don't let the crowds distract you from the apostles; the crowds will eventually desert our Lord; his own chosen disciples will remain true to him. These men are the foundations of the kingdom he has come to establish for the salvation of men. He will test and try them; then he will choose twelve of them best fitted for their destined work. He will train them in his ideals and principles, by word and example; most of all, they will learn from living day after day in his company.

The map on page 76 will be needed a lot for the next five chapters; our Lord is never far from the lake during the next eighteen months. Thirty miles to the north is mount Hermon, 9,000 feet high. It can be seen, majestic and snow-capped, from almost any part of the Holy Land. It is there that the Galilean ministry reaches its climax, with Peter's act of faith in our Lord's divinity, the following of the Church, and the Transfiguration (Chapter 7). You might say that our Lord's eyes are fixed on Hermon, during his Galilean ministry; everything is leading towards it. After that, for the next five chapters (8-12), his eyes are on Jerusalem, eighty miles to the south; there he will accomplish his second task by his death on the cross.



### Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

When he rebuked prince Herod over Herodias his brother's wife, and his shameful deeds, Herod, to crown all, shut John up in prison. And now it became known to the Lord that the Pharisees had been told, 'Jesus is making more disciples and baptizing a greater number than John'; although it was his disciples who baptized, not Jesus himself. After this, hearing of John's imprisonment, he left Judea, and once more withdrew into Galilee. And he was obliged to go by way of Samaria. Thus he came to a Samaritan city called Sichar, close by the plot of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph; and there was a well called Jacob's well. There, then, Jesus sat down, tired after his journey, by the well; it was about noon. And when a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me some to drink.' (His disciples were away in the city at this time, buying food.)

Whereupon the Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, who are a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, to give you drink?' (The Jews, you must know, have no dealings with the Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, 'If you knew what it is God gives, and who this is that is saying to you, "Give me drink," it would have been for you to ask him instead, and he would have given you living water.'

'Sir,' the woman said to him, 'you have no bucket, and the well is deep; how then can you provide living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob? It was he who gave us this well; he himself and his sons and his cattle have drunk out of it.'

Jesus answered her, 'Anyone who drinks such water as this will be thirsty again afterwards; the man who drinks the water I give him will not know thirst any more. The



**Jacob's Well May 28 A.D.**

John spared no one in his rebukes. The Pharisees had felt his stinging words, and now so did Herod Antipas, prince of Galilee and Perea. Antipas imprisoned him immediately in his fortress at Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. With John out of the way, the Pharisees could now concentrate their attacks on Jesus. So he decided to leave hostile Judea, and make Galilee the scene of his ministry; there he will labour for the next eighteen months. Possibly to avoid trouble from Antipas' police, who had just arrested John further up the Jordan, Jesus returned to Galilee through the Samaritan hill country to the west. It was now a month after the paschal feast, and so the Samaritans would not be on the lookout for Jewish pilgrims; moreover, a small party coming up from the Jordan would not attract attention. This route was also more pleasant and cooler than the Jordan in May.

Our Lord was tired after the morning walk from the Jordan; it would be about twelve miles, and uphill all the way. How many disciples were with him? He was left alone at the well; hardly more than two or three would be required to buy food. John, who tells the story, was one of them; Peter probably another, and James maybe the third. Jacob's well, about 100 feet deep, was almost 2,000 years old; it was only a few hundred yards from Sichar (Sichem, where Abraham had first settled in the Promised Land).

The woman came when there would be nobody at the well; the women of Sichar would draw water morning and evening. Our Lord was most likely resting in the shade of a tree nearby; the woman hoped that he was asleep, and would not notice her. But the Good Shepherd is never too tired to search out the lost sheep. As soon as she drew the water, he began his simple instruction based on the present situation: thirst and water. Water is kept in wells and cisterns; there are no running streams in summer, except the Jordan. Jesus' promise of such a stream ('living water') sounded fantastic to the woman, when he could not even procure



water I give him will be a spring of water within him, that flows continually to bring him everlasting life.'

'Then, Sir,' said the woman, 'give me water such as that, so that I may never be thirsty and have to come here for water again.'

At this, Jesus said to her, 'Go home, fetch your husband, and come back here.'

'I have no husband,' answered the woman.

And Jesus told her, 'True enough, you have no husband. You have had five husbands, but the man who is with you now is no husband of yours; you have told the truth over this.'

The woman said to him, 'Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Well, it was our fathers' way to worship on this mountain, although you Jews tell us that the place where men ought to worship is in Jerusalem.'

'Believe me, woman,' Jesus said to her, 'the time is coming when you will not go to this mountain, nor yet to Jerusalem, to worship the Father. You worship you cannot tell what, we worship knowing what it is we worship; salvation, after all, is to come from the Jews; but the time is coming, nay, has already come, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; such men as these the Father claims for his worshippers. God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'

'Yes,' said the woman, 'I know that Messiah' (that is, the Christ) 'is to come; and when he comes, he will tell us everything.'

Jesus said to her, 'I, who speak to you, am the Christ.'

### **Jesus Instructs His Disciples**

With that, his disciples came up, and were surprised to find him talking to the woman; but none of them asked, 'What mean you?' or 'Why are you talking to her?'

And so the woman put down her water-pot, and went



a drink from the well. But he was raising her mind to higher things: the life of sanctifying grace that completely satisfies all the thirsting of human beings for holiness and union with God. The woman had done him a favour in giving him a drink; he would repay her for it with the gift of eternal life.

Our Lord now adopts a new line of approach. The woman has been won over from her jeering, jesting attitude to a respectful request for assistance; his kindness and sincerity has deeply moved her. But she is still thinking in terms of material things, whereas Jesus has come to save her from sin. His sudden turn of the conversation to her own life completes the conquest of this outcast; she at once admits her own sinful life. This man must surely be a great prophet of the Lord to know her life so intimately. Would not the expected Redeemer be such a one as he?

But one difficulty remains; she is a Samaritan. These Samaritans were Gentiles sent into Palestine by Assyria to replace the ten tribes carried into captivity in 722 B.C. They had adopted the Jewish religion, but the Jews stubbornly refused to admit them into the chosen people: there had been bitter enmity now for centuries. In opposition to Jerusalem they had built a temple on mount Gerizim ('this mountain'); there they worshipped the Lord God of Israel. How then would the Jewish Messiah treat them?

Our Lord solved her problem by making two distinctions, (1) the place, (2) the manner of worship. In his kingdom men will not be tied to any particular place of worship; to worship 'in spirit' means to worship God everywhere; the time of salvation has come for the whole world. Worship 'in truth' refers to the perfect homage to be paid to God through Jesus Christ; no longer the shadowy imperfection of the old sacrifices, but the reality and perfection of the new and eternal sacrifice (pp. 350-352).

The woman's reaction to this revelation of Jesus is prompt; at once she becomes an apostle intent on leading others to him who has completely reformed her life. She could not run with a waterpot on her head, so she leaves it at the well; her one concern now is to make Jesus known. She no longer has any fear of the



back to the city, to tell the folk there, 'Come and have sight of a man who has told me all the story of my life; can this be the Christ?' So they left the city, and came out to find him.

Meanwhile, his disciples were urging him, 'Master, take some food.'

But he told them, 'I have food to eat of which you know nothing.'

Whereupon his disciples said to one another, 'Can somebody have brought him food?'

But Jesus said to them, 'My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish the task he gave me. Is it not a saying of yours, "It is four whole months before the harvest comes"? Why, lift up your eyes, I tell you, and look at the fields, they are white with the promise of harvest. The wages already being paid to him who reaps this harvest, the crop he gathers in, is eternal life, in which sower and reaper are to rejoice together. And here the proverb fits, which is true enough, "One man sows, and another reaps." The harvest I have sent you out to reap is one on which you bestowed no labour; others have laboured, and it is their labours you have inherited.'

Many of the Samaritans from that city came to believe in him through the woman's testimony, 'He told me all the story of my life.' And when they came out to him, the Samaritans urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days there. Many more of them came to believe through his preaching; 'It is not through your report,' they told the woman, 'that we believe now; we have heard him for ourselves, and we recognize that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.'

### **Jesus Heals a Royal Official's Son**

Then, after two days, he passed on and returned to Galilee. Jesus himself bore witness that it is in his own



judgment of her fellow townsmen; her sinful life is a thing of the past; there could be no better proof of her complete conversion. The effect on the inhabitants of Sichar at such a sudden change in her shows how much this woman has altered since her meeting with Jesus at Jacob's well.

Meanwhile it is time for the three disciples to have a lesson from the Master. Just as our Lord has used his thirst to instruct the woman, he now uses his hunger to teach them the essential of the new life they are beginning to lead. His hunger is for the souls of sinful men; to save a sinful world is 'the task' given him by his Father. This first victory in winning a soul from sin turns his thoughts to the future, and the part to be played by his first followers in converting the world. At the moment they are more concerned with satisfying material hunger; there is plenty of time to make plans for future work.

This attitude of theirs reminds him of the proverb: After sowing it will be four months till harvesting; so one can sit down and rest till then. But how quickly time passes; the fields around them are almost ready for harvesting (white, not golden grain in Palestine). At this moment the Samaritans are coming out to them, ready for conversion; they must be ready, then, at all times, to abandon all personal interests, even to go hungry, when souls are in need of help. No one can sit back and rest; others have already sown the seed before them (here he is thinking of the prophets of the Old Testament, and John the Baptist).

Our Lord could reveal himself as the Messiah here in Samaria because there was no danger of political revolt, as there would be in Galilee. The Samaritans were outside the general trend of Jewish opinion (p. 29). It is worth noting that Jesus worked no wonders or miracles to convert these Samaritans.

### **Cana in Galilee May 28 A.D.**

It was now a month since our Lord had driven the buyers and sellers from the temple courts in Jerusalem, at the paschal feast; his fellow Galileans, however, were still talking of it when he



country a prophet goes unhonoured. And now, when he came back into Galilee, the Galileans too made him welcome, because they had seen what he did in Jerusalem at the time of the feast; they had gone up to the feast like himself. And so he came once more to Cana of Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And a royal official, whose son was lying sick at Capharnaum, hearing that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death.

Jesus said to him, 'You must see signs and miracles happen, or you will not believe.'

'Sir,' the royal official said to him, 'come down before my child dies.'

'Go back home,' Jesus told him; 'your son is to live.'

And the man began his journey home, putting his trust in the words Jesus had spoken to him; and while he was still on his way down, his servants met him with the message that his son was still alive. So he asked what time it had been when he felt easier; and they told him, 'He recovered from his fever yesterday, at one o'clock.' The father recognized that it had happened at the very time when Jesus said to him, 'Your son is to live'; and he and all his household found faith.

Thus for the second time Jesus did a miracle upon his return from Judea to Galilee.

### **Jesus Preaches in a Synagogue**

And Jesus came back to Galilee with the power of the Spirit upon him; word of him went round through all the neighbouring country, and he began to preach in their synagogues, so that his praise was on all men's lips. 'The appointed time has come,' he said, 'and the kingdom of God is near at hand; repent, and believe the gospel.'

Then he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went into the synagogue there, as his custom



arrived home. All along the road he was greeted enthusiastically, as he passed through Nazareth and on to Cana. (It would seem that his mother had been living at Cana since he first left home, four months before, to go down to John the Baptist at the Jordan.) Here Peter, James and John took leave of Jesus and continued their journey to Capharnaum, twenty miles further on by the lake of Galilee. Their arrival brought hope to a government official of Herod Antipas; his son was dying; the doctors said that he would hardly live another day. There was just a possibility that the father could get Jesus down from Cana in time; the return journey could be made in a single day on horseback. There is haste and urgency in every word and action of this desperate father, racing time for the life of his son.

He arrived in Cana shortly after midday. Our Lord saw his great anxiety, but also the somewhat superstitious belief that he could heal only by touch, or by saying some magical formula over the sick person. So the father must be made to understand that twenty miles means nothing to One who possesses divine power as Jesus does. That he did believe is clear from the fact that he did not rush back home as he had intended, but waited until the following day. Next morning his servants came out to meet him, hoping to save him the embarrassment of bringing Jesus on an unnecessary errand, and to relieve his anxiety about his son. This Jew's name may have been either Chusa or Manahen, two officials of Herod later mentioned as followers of our Lord (p. 106.)

### **Nazareth May 28 A.D.**

John the Baptist began his preaching out in the open by the banks of the Jordan; Jesus began his ministry in the synagogues of Galilee. In every village throughout the land, and wherever a Jewish colony existed outside Palestine, these meeting-places had been erected. They were primarily places of instruction, but also places of prayer (they would correspond to our church-schools). The children were taught there during the week, and on the sabbath the adults met for the reading of the scriptures, an



was on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. The book given to him was the book of the prophet Isaias; so he opened it, and found the place where the words ran: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me, and sent me out to preach the gospel to the poor; to bid the prisoners go free, and the blind have sight; to set the oppressed at liberty, to proclaim a year when men may find acceptance with the Lord.'

Then he shut the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All those who were in the synagogue fixed their eyes on him, and thus he began speaking to them, 'This scripture which I have read in your hearing is today fulfilled.'

All bore testimony to him, and were astonished at the gracious words which came from his mouth.

### **Jesus Drives Out an Unclean Spirit**

And now, forsaking the city of Nazareth, he came and settled down in Capharnaum, which is by the sea shore, in the country of Zabulon and Nephthalim, in fulfilment of what was said by the prophet Isaias: 'The land of Zabulon and Nephthalim, on the sea road, beyond Jordan, the Galilee of the Gentiles! The people that abode in darkness has seen a great light; for men abiding in a land where death overshadowed them, light has dawned.'

And he began teaching them there on the sabbath; and they were amazed by his teaching, for he sat there teaching them like one who had authority, not like the scribes. In the synagogue was a man who was possessed by an unclean spirit, that cried out with a loud voice: 'Nay, why do you meddle with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to make an end of us? I recognize you for what you are, the Holy One of God.'

Jesus rebuked it; 'Silence!' he said; 'come out of him.'

Then the unclean spirit threw him into a convulsion



instruction, and prayers. (The Mass as far as the gospel and sermon is taken from the synagogue service.)

Our Lord was a hero in Galilee, after his daring cleansing of the temple, at the last paschal feast; this popularity guaranteed him a welcome everywhere. Now that he promised freedom from oppression, and announced the nearness of the Messianic kingdom with such sincerity and eloquence, an invitation from every synagogue was assured. Only one sample of his teaching is given here: he selected a passage from the scriptures that spoke of the Messiah; he claimed to fulfil those promises in his own Person. His object was to make his audience aware of the need for redemption, and to teach them the true nature of the Messiah-Redeemer and the kingdom which he had come to found.

The people of his own city of Nazareth heard him gladly; when he comes back seven months later, they will try to kill him (p. 130).

### **Capharnaum May 28 A.D.**

The heart and hub of Galilee was its harp-shaped (the name Genesareth is derived from the Hebrew word for a harp) fresh water lake, with a population of more than 100,000 settled on its shores, over six hundred feet below sea level. Herod Antipas, who ruled in Galilee, had recently removed his capital from Sephoris, near Nazareth, to a newly-built city on the western shore of the lake, which he named Tiberias after the Roman emperor. Our Lord chose another city on the same side of the lake, but near the northern end; Capharnaum now became his home, or better his base, for the next eighteen months. It was on the main trade routes of the East, in close contact with Greek culture and Roman imperialism; a most suitable place to found a universal kingdom. Nazareth, more isolated and secluded, was well fitted for the hidden life of Jesus, but not for his public ministry.

Our Lord continued his policy of proclaiming his message in the synagogues on the sabbath. A dramatic incident occurred during his first discourse at Capharnaum; the evil spirits now recognized that a formidable adversary threatened their reign.



before them all, and cried out with a loud voice, and so came out of him without doing him any injury. Wonder fell upon them all, as they said to one another, 'What is this word of his? See how he has authority and power to lay his command on the unclean spirits, so that they come out!'

And the story of his doings spread into every part of the countryside, through the whole region of Galilee.

### **Jesus Cures Peter's Mother-in-Law**

As soon as he had left the synagogue, he came into Simon and Andrew's house; James and John were with him. The mother of Simon's wife was lying sick there, in the grip of a violent fever, and they entreated his aid for her; whereupon he went close and took her by the hand, and lifted her up. And all at once the fever left her, and she rose and began ministering to them.

And when it was evening and the sun went down, they brought to him all those who were afflicted, and those who were possessed by devils; so that the whole city stood crowding there at the door. And he laid his hands on each one of them and healed all that were sick, in fulfilment of the word spoken by Isaias the prophet, 'He took our infirmities upon himself, and bore our sicknesses.'

Many, too, had devils cast out of them, which cried aloud, 'You are the Son of God'; but he rebuked them and would not have them speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

Then, at very early dawn, he left them, and went away to a lonely place, and began praying there. Simon and his companions went in search of him: and when they found him, they told him, 'All men are looking for you.'

And he said to them, 'Let us go to the next country towns, so that I can preach there too; it is for this I have come.'



More clearly than the Jews, Satan understood the true nature of the Messianic kingdom. The fight was on now in earnest: the holiness of Christ against the evil of sin. Our Lord commanded the evil spirits not to proclaim him as the Messiah, because he had no need of assistance from them, and also because the time had not come yet for an open declaration. His many clashes and continual victory over them during his public ministry was clear proof of the real nature of his kingdom, spiritual not material.

Another incident on the same sabbath caused quite a stir in the city; it was the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. (Some have thought from this scene that Peter's wife was no longer living.) It was the first miracle of this kind. Here was a man of great power, fearless with demons and kind to the suffering. As soon as the sabbath rest was over, at sundown, an excited, enthusiastic crowd besieged him. He made no diagnosis, no preparations, no long formulas; but with a touch of his hand he healed all the sick, and with a word of command drove out the devils; he will never want for an audience any more in Galilee; crowds will gather round him wherever he goes.

When the news spread, more people were waiting for him early in the morning; he had disappeared. He was away on the hill-side, seeking new spiritual strength from his Father in prayer; a lesson that he was to give many times to his intimate followers. Four of them are mentioned here, all residents of Capharnaum (Peter and Andrew formerly lived at Bethsaida, p. 42.) They had been associated with him before, and had been waiting for his promised appearance at Capharnaum. Probably Philip, Nathanael, Thomas, and our Lord's three cousins, James, Jude, and Simon were also in his company for this first missionary tour of Galilee. Judas, too, may have joined him about this time; the other member of the twelve, Matthew, will soon appear on the scene.

Although at first our Lord made Peter's dwelling his home, it seems that our Lady soon settled at Capharnaum, and assisted the



So Jesus went about the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every kind of disease and infirmity among the people.

### **Peter, Andrew, James and John Called**

It happened that he was walking by the lake of Genesareth at a time when the crowd was pressing close about him to hear the word of God; and he saw two boats moored at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had gone ashore, and were washing their nets. And he went on board one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to stand off a little from the land; and so, sitting down, he began to teach the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Stand out into deep water, and let down your nets for a catch.'

Simon answered him, 'Master, we have toiled all night, and caught nothing; but at your word I will let down the net.'

And when they had done this, they took a great quantity of fish, so that the net was near breaking, and they must needs beckon to their partners who were in the other boat to come and help them. When these came, they filled both boats, so that they were ready to sink. At seeing this, Simon Peter fell down and caught Jesus by the knees; 'Leave me to myself, Lord,' he said; 'I am a sinner.' Such amazement had overcome both him and all his crew, at the catch of fish they had made; so it was, too, with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners.

So, when they had brought their boats to land, Jesus said to Simon and his brother Andrew, 'Come and follow me; I will make you into fishers of men.' And they dropped their nets immediately, and followed him. Then he went a little further, and saw James the son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in the boat with their father



group of women who were to take care of the material wants of her Son and his disciples. It is natural to suppose that she would be with him; and her intimate association with these women, later in Jerusalem (p. 402), indicates a long-standing friendship.

### Lake of Galilee May 28 A.D.

Our Lord had not yet any permanent disciples. He probably did not venture far from Capharnaum in these first few weeks; Bethsaida, Corozain, and Magdala were all close by. His future apostles went about their ordinary work, joining him whenever possible. He was giving them a trial, and an idea of the work in store for them. Then, one morning late in May, he walked along the shore of the lake, south from Capharnaum. On the way crowds soon joined him; he had now begun to preach to them during the week, and even out of doors. About two miles from Capharnaum a number of warm springs run into the lake; it is still a favourite fishing place; its modern name is Tabgha (the seven springs). A few sleepy and unsuccessful fishermen were cleaning sticks and weeds from their nets; among them, as he expected, was the man whom he had destined to rule his kingdom, after his return to the Father. His choice of Simon's boat as a floating pulpit was something new; the crowds could sit in comfort on the promontory between Tabgha and Ain Tineh, and both see and hear Jesus easily.

Peter was not very enthusiastic about another fishing expedition; he had just cleaned his long drop-net, and had it folded neatly in the stern of the boat; every fisherman knew, too, that the night was the best time for fishing. But his natural opposition was only momentary; the words were hardly out of his mouth before he was pulling offshore to carry out the Master's bidding. A few hundred yards out, he and Andrew let down the hundred yards of triple-mesh net in a circle and began splashing the water inside the circle with their oars and banging on the boat, so as to frighten the fish into the net. The miracle which followed had such a terrifying effect on Peter because it was so personal; it was meant for him. He was conscious of his own sinfulness in such close contact with this holy Person. Such



Zebedee, repairing their nets, and he called them to him; immediately they left their father in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

### **Jesus Heals a Leper**

Afterwards, while he was in one of the cities, a man who was far gone in leprosy, came into the house, asking for his aid. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face in entreaty; 'Lord,' he said, 'if it be your will, you have power to make me clean.'

Jesus was moved with pity; he held out his hand and touched him, and said, 'It is my will; be you made clean.' And at the word, the leprosy all at once left him, and he was cleansed.

And he spoke to him threateningly, and sent him away there and then: 'Be sure you do not speak of this at all,' he said, 'to anyone; away with you, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift for your cleansing which Moses ordained, to make the truth known to them.'

But he, as soon as he had gone out of the house, began to talk publicly and spread the story round; so that Jesus could no longer go into any of the cities openly, but dwelt in lonely places apart; and still from every side they came together to listen to him, and be healed of their infirmities. And he would steal away from them into the desert and pray there.

### **A Paralytic Let Down Through a Roof**

Then, after some days, he went into his own city, Capernaum, again. And as soon as word went round that he was in a house there, such a crowd gathered that there was no room left even in front of the door; and he preached the word to them. Some Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting by, who had come from every village in Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was there, to grant healing. Just then,



dispositions were most pleasing to our Lord; these were the men who were destined to convert the world. From now on all four gave their lives entirely to Jesus.

### **A Lakeside City May 28 A.D.**

Many skin diseases were classified as leprosy by the Jews as well as the repulsive affliction that still bears the name. Their legislation on lepers is given in Leviticus 13-14. Because of the fear of contagion, lepers were isolated; they were forbidden all association with their fellow men; they had to wear funereal clothing and warn passers-by with the cry 'Unclean! Unclean!' If cured, they had to present themselves for medical examination at the Lepers' Room in the temple; the priest on duty issued a clearance certificate allowing them to resume normal life in the community. At the same time certain sacrifices (two sparrows and two lambs) were offered to God. This was the prescription of the Mosaic law that Jesus commanded the leper to carry out. He had violated the quarantine law in entering a house in the first place; this was the cause of Jesus' threatening words. As a true Israelite he would observe all the commands of the law; he must not give the impression that he sanctioned its violation.

The Messianic enthusiasm aroused among the turbulent Galileans at the sight of this repulsive creature, now a normal human being again, caused Jesus to avoid such dangerous demonstrations. But the crowds still sought him out; he had to steal away from them for the quiet hours of prayer with his Father.

### **Capharnaum June 28 A.D.**

Under cover of darkness Jesus slipped into Capharnaum with his disciples; but early next day his presence was discovered, either in Peter's house or in Mary's home, opening off the same courtyard. Most of the houses in Palestine were built around a large courtyard; a raised porch with a flimsy roof provided a pulpit for our Lord; the crowds packed the open courtyard. Well up in front were a special group, the Pharisees. This is the first time that they come into the picture by the lake. The main reason



four men brought there on a bed one who was paralysed, whom they tried to carry in and set down in Jesus' presence. But, finding no way of carrying him in, because of the crowd, they went up on to the house-top, stripped the tiles from the roof over the place where Jesus was, and made an opening; then they let him down between the tiles, bed and all, into the clear space in front of Jesus.

And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralysed man, 'Son, take courage, your sins are forgiven.'

And at this, some of the Pharisees and scribes said to themselves, 'Who can this be, that he talks so blasphemously? Who can forgive sins but God, and God only?'

Jesus knew at once, in his spirit, of these secret thoughts of theirs, and said to them openly, 'Why do you reason thus in your minds? Which command is more lightly given, to say to the paralysed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise up, take your bed with you, and walk"? And now to convince you that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins while he is on earth' (here he spoke to the paralysed man), 'Rise up, take your bed with you, and go home.'

And he rose up at once in full sight of them, took up his bedding, and went home, giving praise to God. Astonishment came over them all, and they praised God, full of awe; 'We never saw the like,' they said; 'we have seen strange things today.'

### **The Call of Matthew the Publican**

Then he went out by the sea again; and all the people came to him, and he taught them there. And as he passed further on, he caught sight of a publican, called Levi (Matthew), the son of Alphaeus, sitting at work in the customs-house, and said to him, 'Follow me'; and he rose up from his place, and left all behind, and followed him.

Then Levi made a great feast for him in his house,



why Jesus left Judea, two months before, was the stubborn opposition of these men. His success in Galilee, the enthusiasm of the crowds, and the gathering of disciples round him, moved the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to send delegates to observe and report on him. The gospels now give five incidents showing the conflict with these leaders of the people; it will develop into settled hostility, and finally bring about the death of our Lord.

A dramatic interlude gave Jesus the opportunity of showing the true nature of his mission (forgiveness of sins), and sufficient evidence for thinking men of his divine nature. An outer stairway gave access to the flat roof; it was easy work to remove the hard mud covering and let down the paralysed man on his pallet by means of ropes. Nothing was said, either by the man (obviously a believer in the power of Jesus), or the Pharisees. Even though our Lord's words were addressed primarily to the Pharisees, he showed a deep, personal interest in the man at his feet; he was not merely an object on which to demonstrate his power; he was a human being with a soul to save. So he tested his faith by first forgiving his sins and only then healing his body.

This is the most explicit public claim to divine power that our Lord makes during his Galilean ministry. He is not claiming delegated power from God (a human being could have such power, as a priest in the sacrament of Penance); he claims authority in his own right as the Messiah ('Son of Man'), during his earthly life. This can only mean that he is God incarnate. He speaks openly like this mainly for the learned Pharisees; he would have them understand his claim to divinity from the start.

### Tabgha June 28 A.D.

Our Lord walked along the shore of the lake, accompanied by his many disciples. Near Tabgha may still be seen the stones of an ancient wharf; this is probably the place where Matthew was employed by Herod Antipas to collect duty on goods landed there. Matthew was no stranger to Jesus and his followers; most likely he received the tax on fish caught in the lake, and so would be well known to Peter and the other fishermen.



and there was a crowded company of publicans and sinners at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of these who followed him. Thereupon the scribes and Pharisees, seeing him eat with publicans and sinners in his company, complained to his disciples, 'How comes it that your master eats with publicans and sinners?'

Jesus heard it, and said, 'It is not those who are in health that have need of the physician, it is those who are sick. Go home and find out what the words mean, "It is mercy that wins favour with me, not sacrifice." I have not come to call the just; I have come to call sinners to repentance.'

### **On Fasting and the Sabbath Day**

John's disciples and the Pharisees were keeping a fast day at that time. And they came and said to him, 'How is it that your disciples eat and drink, when John's disciples are always fasting and praying, and the Pharisees' disciples too?'

To them Jesus said, 'Can you expect the men of the bridegroom's company to go fasting, while the bridegroom is still with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot be expected to fast; but the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then they will fast, when that day comes.'

And he told them a parable: 'Nobody uses a piece taken from a new cloak to patch an old one; if that is done, he will have torn the new cloak, and the piece taken from the new will not match the old; the new piecing takes away threads from the old cloth, and makes the rent in it worse. Nor does anybody put new wine into old wineskins; if that is done, the new wine bursts the skins, and there is the wine spilt and the skins spoiled. If the wine is new, it must be put into fresh wineskins, and so both are kept safe. Nobody who has been drinking old wine calls at once for new; he will tell you "The old is better." '



I have identified his father, Alphacus, with the husband of Mary, mother of James and Joseph (p. 131); this makes him a cousin of Jesus. As a tax-gatherer he was the black sheep of the family. Mark and Luke call him Levi, out of reverence for the apostles; but Matthew, in his humility, gives the name Matthew here and calls himself a publican in the list of the twelve; to be called by Christ is an honour that removes all former distinctions.

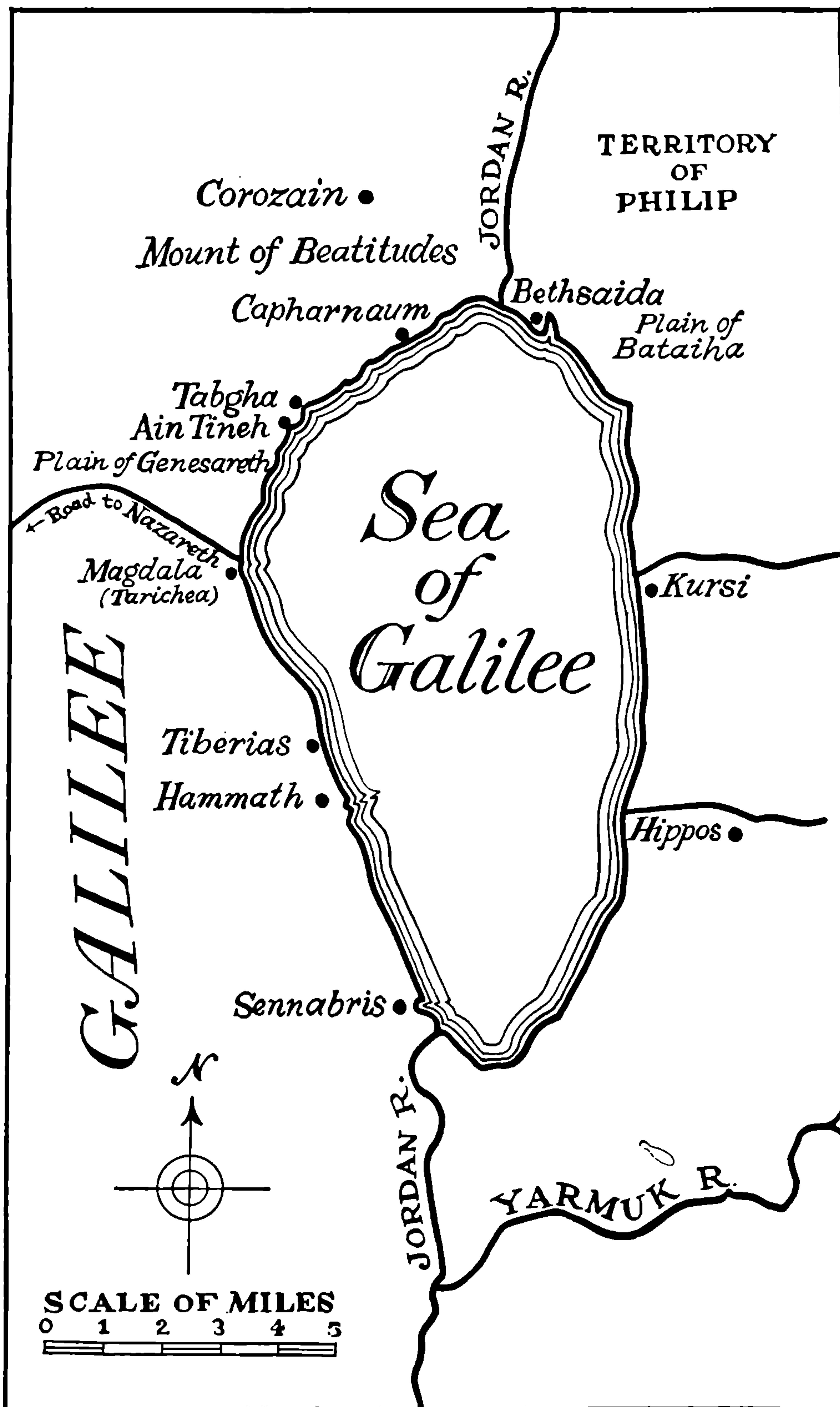
The association of Jesus with such detested Jews ('sinners' here means legally unclean) caused the second conflict with the Pharisees; the compassion of Jesus in contrast with the hard legalism of the Pharisees. Once more the nature of the kingdom is stressed; it is salvation from sin that is Jesus' work.

Fasting was prescribed only on one day of the year by the Mosaic law, the Day of Atonement, 10 'Tishri (October). The Pharisees had introduced fasting on each Monday and Thursday as well; it was on one of these that this incident occurred. The Jews ate nothing from sunrise till sunset on a fast day; it was a time of mourning, and they showed their sorrow by gloomy faces. Such sadness is not becoming to Jesus' disciples; they must be joyful.

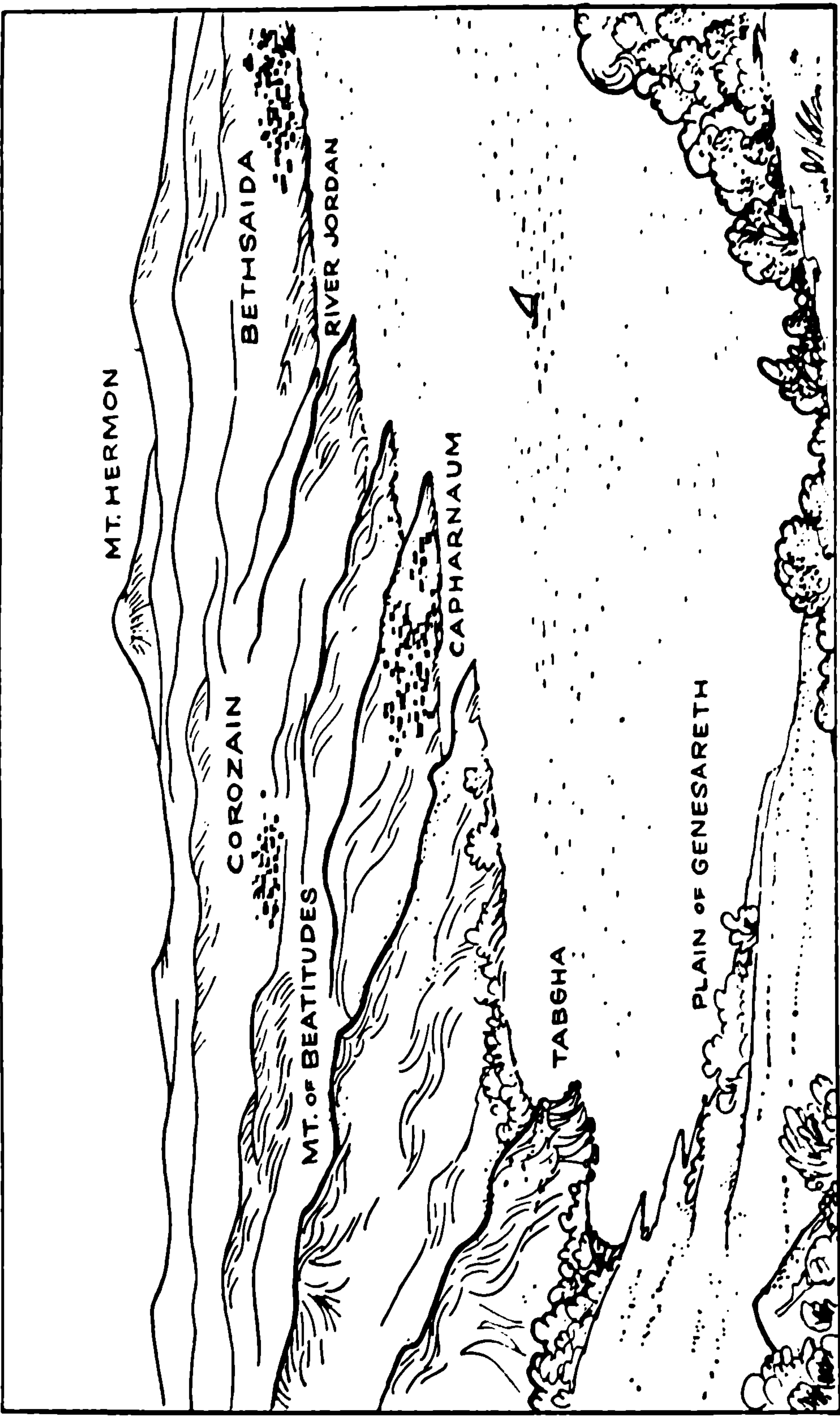
The illustration from festive wedding celebrations had special point for John's disciples; he had used this same image in his last words by the Jordan, two months before (p. 50). Now he was in prison. The time would come for Jesus' disciples too, when he would be wrested from them (this is the first mention of his death since the opening of the Galilean ministry).

With a wedding are naturally associated fine garments and wine. Our Lord passes smoothly, and with great skill, to illustrate a most fundamental lesson. The Pharisees have tried to patch up the Mosaic law by adding new outward observances, such as fasting; he has no intention of continuing this unsound procedure; his gospel is to be a complete renewal from within. The kingdom cannot be confined within the formalism of Pharisaical observance. But time is needed for the Jews to become accustomed to this new way of life; new tastes are only acquired gradually.









MOUNT HERMON FROM ACROSS THE LAKE



It happened that he was walking through the cornfields on the sabbath day; and his disciples, who were hungry, fell to plucking the ears of corn and eating them, rubbing them between their hands. And the Pharisees said to him, 'Look, why are they doing what it is not lawful to do on the sabbath?'

Whereupon he said to them, 'Have you never read of what David did when he and his followers were hard put to it for hunger? How he went into the tabernacle, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the loaves set forth there before God, which only the priests may eat, and gave them, besides, to those who were with him? Or again have you not read in the law that the priests violate the sabbath rest in the temple, and none blames them? And I tell you there is something greater than the temple here. If you had found out what the words mean, "It is mercy, not sacrifice, that wins favour with me," you would not have passed judgment on the guiltless.'

And he told them, 'The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. So that the Son of Man has even the sabbath at his disposal.'

### **The Man with a Withered Hand**

And on another sabbath day it happened that he went into the synagogue to teach, when there was a man there who had his right hand withered. The scribes and Pharisees were watching him, to see whether he would do a work of healing on the sabbath, so that they might have a charge to bring against him. He knew their secret thoughts, and said to the man who had his hand withered, 'Rise up, and come forward'; whereupon he rose to his feet.

Then Jesus said to them, 'I have a question to ask you; which is right, to do good on the sabbath day, or to do harm? To save life, or to make away with it?'



The third of the ten commandments given by God to Moses, 'Remember to keep the sabbath day holy,' exerted an influence on the life of the Jews unequalled by any other law. It occurred regularly and constantly in their lives; its transgression could be observed by everyone. Just as God rested on the seventh day of creation, so they were to rest from work. The Pharisees had compiled a list of thirty-nine 'works' forbidden on the sabbath; the exact observance of all these detailed precepts was the essential of their lives. One of the forbidden works was 'harvesting'; the Pharisees extended this to the most trifling actions, such as rubbing ears of corn between the hands.

Jesus' reply is to go back to the purpose of the law: it was made to give man leisure and opportunity to draw near to God; it should be a help, not a hindrance, to the service of God. The Pharisees admitted this for the priests on duty in Jerusalem; Jesus claims as much for his followers. The example of David is not concerned with the sabbath but with a similar positive precept; its aptness is in the fact that the disciples, like David's followers, were hungry. In settling this question, our Lord asserts the superiority of the new order (Christianity) over the old (Judaism). This, and his claim of equality with the supreme lawgiver, means he is divine.

### Capharnaum June 28 A.D.

This is the second conflict with the Pharisees on the burning question of sabbath observance; four more clashes on the same subject are recorded later in the gospels (pp. 152, 206, 242, 252). It is probably back at Capharnaum that this final incident (of the five recorded here) takes place. Jesus' adversaries have grown bolder in their attempts to compromise him; this time they have set the trap, and are lying in wait for him.

One of the thirty-nine divisions of forbidden work was 'first-aid'; the only occasion when the Pharisees permitted such help was in danger of death; in such cases they made no distinction between men and animals. Our Lord raises the discussion to a higher level: the moral worth of an action is more important than



And they sat there in silence.

Then he said to them, 'Is there a man among you that has a sheep, who would not take hold of it and pull it out, if it should fall into a pit on the sabbath? And of what value is a sheep compared to a man? There is nothing unlawful then in doing a work of mercy on the sabbath day.'

And he looked round on them in anger, grieved at the hardness of their hearts, and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored to him as sound as the other.

### Great Crowds Around Our Lord

Then the Pharisees, overcome with fury, left the synagogue, and at once began plotting with those who were of Herod's party to make away with him. Jesus was aware of this, and withdrew, with his disciples, from the place; and great crowds followed him, from Galilee, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and those who lived about Tyre and Sidon, and throughout the whole of Syria, hearing of all that he did, came in great numbers to him. So he told his disciples to keep a boat ready at need because of the crowd, for fear they should press on him too close; for he did many works of healing, so that all those who were visited with suffering thrust themselves upon him to touch him. The unclean spirits, too, whenever they saw him, used to fall down at his feet and cry out, 'You are the Son of God'; and he would give them a strict charge not to make him known.

And they brought to him all those who were in affliction, distressed with pain and sickness of every sort, the possessed, the lunatics, the paralytics; and he healed all their diseases. This he did to fulfil the word spoken by the prophet Isaias, 'Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen,



the physical consequences; charity, or the love of one's fellow men, is the supreme law of the kingdom of God. There is special point in his reference to 'do harm . . . to make away with life'; that is precisely what the Pharisees are intent on doing to him. He shows his awareness of the hypocrisy behind this seeming concern for God's law. This is a public occasion; the crowds in the synagogue must be shown that their leaders are false and unworthy guides; salvation is to be found in his compassionate heart, not in the merciless legalism of the Pharisees.

This is the only occasion that anger is attributed to our Lord in the whole of the four gospels (see p. 46).

### The Lakeside June 28 A.D.

From now onwards the Pharisees are determined to kill Jesus; resort to force is the only way they can keep their leadership of the people. Being in Herod Antipas' territory, they seek out some of the more influential members of his court to produce a workable plan for the immediate destruction of Jesus. But the time has not come yet for him to lay down his life; so he goes out from Capharnaum along the shore of the lake. Crowds, bigger than ever, now surround him. They are all Jews, but large numbers of them are from outside the Promised Land, which is known in the gospels as Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

In contrast to the contemptuous and domineering ways of the Pharisees, who despised the common people, Jesus was kind and friendly. He was approachable, and never seemed to mind them crowding upon him; he was as interested in them as a brother or father; he was as gentle and sympathetic even as a mother. The Pharisees were insisting all the time on their rights and privileges as leaders; they were always laying down the law and demonstrating their superiority. But here was a great Rabbi who hardly thought of himself; he was willing at all times to do something for them; he would even stop talking if a sick person pushed through the crowd towards him. He loved them as no one ever had before. Saint Matthew sees in this kindness and charity of



my elect, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will lay my spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim judgment among the Gentiles. He will not protest and cry out; none shall hear his voice in the streets. He will not snap the staff that is already crushed, or put out the wick that still smoulders, until the time comes when he crowns his judgment with victory. And the Gentiles will put their trust in his name.'

### **Jesus Chooses His Twelve Apostles**

It was at this time that he went out onto the mountain side, and passed the whole night offering prayer to God, and when day dawned, he called his disciples to him; so they came to him, and he appointed twelve of them to be his companions, and to go out preaching at his command, with authority to cast out unclean spirits, and to heal every kind of disease and infirmity. These he called his apostles. Their names were, first, Simon, also called Peter, then his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the fresh names of Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder), Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, James the son of Alphaeus and Jude his brother, Simon who was called the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who turned traitor.

With them he went down towards the sea, and stood on a level place; a crowd of his disciples was there, and a great gathering of the people from Galilee and Decapolis, Jerusalem and Judea, and the country beyond Jordan. These had come there to listen to him, and be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled by unclean spirits were also cured; so that all the people were eager to touch him, because power went out from him, and healed them all.



Jesus the fulfilment of a prophecy of Isaias; in the crowds coming from the north, south, east, and west, a forecast of the Gentiles, who are to find salvation in the kingdom.

Our Lord commanded both the sick who were healed and the devils when driven out to keep silent. This he did so as to keep in check the false Messianic hope of the people. They were not aware yet of the true nature of the kingdom of heaven.

### Above Capharnaum June 28 A.D.

It was now four months since Jesus' first disciples had come to him down by the Jordan. In the past two months, in Galilee, others had been so attracted by his person and teaching that they stayed on in his company. An important moment had come for the kingdom: Jesus prepared for this solemn event by a night alone in prayer. His own personal work was to redeem mankind by his death on the cross; the task of bringing his redemptive death to all men was to be left to others. He had now to select these men who were to act in his name, and with his authority: a permanent, indestructible body, the hierarchy of the kingdom.

Their number is twelve, the same as the tribes of Israel; they are the forefathers of the new Israel that Jesus has come to found. The word 'apostle' describes their official position; they are sent by Jesus, just as he is sent by the Father. The most important name is placed first; Peter is the head, the vicar of Christ (he is mentioned 94 times in the gospels; John is next with 20). The other intimate followers of our Lord continued to be with him, but without the official status of the twelve; a year later their number is given as seventy-two (p. 216). Usually, however, in the gospels, all are called disciples, without any distinction.

That same morning, Jesus, with his newly-chosen assistants, came down to where the crowd was waiting; there he delivered his inaugural address, on the hillside near Capharnaum.



Chapter 4: The Sermon on the Mount



JUST as God gave the Old law to the Jewish people on mount Sinai, so now Jesus proclaims his New law from the mount of Beatitudes, with that same supreme authority which belongs to God alone. The repetition (six times) of the rubric, *it was said . . . but I tell you*, is a most emphatic claim; it marks him off from all the prophets who came before him; Yahweh (the Hebrew name for the Lord) himself could have said no more.

God's revealed code of laws for the Jews is written down in the first five books of the Bible; it is ordinarily called the Mosaic law, because Moses was the representative of the people to whom God made these laws known; he also wrote the five inspired books in which it is contained. The Hebrew word for law is *Torah*. The essential element of the *Torah* is the ten commandments, a codification of the natural law concerning man's relations to God and his neighbour. But the *Torah* contains not only laws relating to religion; it contains civil law as well (there was no distinction between politics and religion in Israel). The *Torah* regulates every detail of the life of the individual; in it there are 365 prohibitions, and 248 positive commands.

The scribes and Pharisees were the guardians of the *Torah*; they taught it to the children in the schools and explained it to the people in the synagogues. But the trouble was that they had lost the true meaning of God's law; they were so much concerned with observing every minute detail of the letter, that they missed its true spirit. Instead of leading the people to love God, they imposed heavy and more complicated regulations, which were like a yoke upon their necks (pp. 320-324). Our Lord's purpose in the Sermon was to emphasize the one fundamental, which external observance had obliterated: the love of God and the neighbour. Holiness is in man's will, not in his actions.

St. Matthew is inclined to group together words that our Lord spoke on various occasions. So I have left the *Our Father*, and *Trust in God* (Matt. 6) till later; mount Olivet is the traditional place of the *Our Father* (p. 222; for the other, see p. 236).



## The Eight Beatitudes

Jesus, when he saw how great was their number, sat down there on the mountain side; and his disciples came about him. Then he lifted up his eyes towards his disciples, and began speaking to them; this was the teaching he gave.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the patient; they shall inherit the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart; they shall see God.

Blessed are the peace-makers; they shall be counted the children of God.

Blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

‘Blessed are you, when men revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, because of me. Be glad and light-hearted, for a rich reward awaits you in heaven; their fathers treated the prophets no better. But woe upon you who are rich; you have your comfort already. Woe upon you who are filled full; you shall be hungry. Woe upon you who laugh now; you shall mourn and weep. Woe upon you, when all men speak well of you; their fathers treated the false prophets no worse.

‘You are the salt of the earth; if salt loses its taste, what is there left to give taste to it? There is no more to be done with it, but throw it out of doors for men to tread it under foot. You are the light of the world; a city cannot be hidden if it is built on a mountain top. A lamp is not lighted to be put away under a bushel measure; it is



**Mount of Beatitudes June 28 A.D.**

The eight beatitudes are an official statement by our Lord of the qualities he requires in the members of his kingdom; he reverses completely the standards of happiness accepted by the world. He was speaking primarily to the men he had just chosen, but also to the crowd gathered about him eagerly awaiting the realization of the kingdom. The fundamental in their lives must be what was fundamental in his: the love of God and man. He wanted men who were willing to imitate and become like him; he asked nothing of them that he himself did not practise.

They were expecting a kingdom to destroy the domination of Rome by force of arms; he had come to destroy sin. He did not want soldiers for his kingdom, he wanted saints. The conquest of self, and false human standards, was the training required for membership. They must be prepared to follow him in poverty, in patience under affliction and persecution; not retaliating but forgiving, merciful and peace-loving; clean of heart, i.e. not satisfied with outward observance but completely given up to the pursuit of personal holiness, the union of mind and will with God.

They will find happiness ('blessed') in the kingdom, because he has guaranteed it, and he is God. The kingdom, while primarily the church on earth, is to last forever; final happiness is to live with Christ eternally. (The second part of each beatitude is a synonym for either the church militant or triumphant.)

The eighth beatitude is developed especially for his disciples, who are addressed as 'you'; the cross is to be their special badge (p. 170); it will identify them with him.

The members of Christ's kingdom must not only perfect themselves (the eight beatitudes), they must communicate this holiness to all mankind ('earth, world'). They are God's instruments; they can no longer live hidden and retired; they are now public property. Men are sunk in sin and error; they have earthly desires and worldly principles. The apostles must make sinners



put on the lamp-stand, to give light to all the people of the house; and your light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

‘Do not think that I have come to set aside the law and the prophets; I have not come to set them aside, but to bring them to perfection. Believe me, heaven and earth must disappear sooner than one jot, one flourish disappear from the law; it must all be accomplished. Whoever, then, sets aside one of these commandments, though it were the least, and teaches men to do the like, will be of least account in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches others to keep them will be accounted in the kingdom of heaven as the greatest. And I tell you, that if your justice does not give fuller measure than the justice of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

### **Anger Can Be as Sinful as Murder**

‘You have heard that it was said to the men of old, “You shall do no murder; if a man commits murder, he must answer for it before the court of justice.” But I tell you that any man who is angry with his brother must answer for it before the court of justice, and any man who says “Raca” to his brother must answer for it before the Council; and any man who says to his brother, “You fool,” must answer for it in hell fire. If you are bringing your gift, then, before the altar, and remember there that your brother has some ground of complaint against you, leave your gift lying there before the altar, and go home; be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back to offer your gift.

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I tell you that he who casts his eyes on a



pleasing to God, as salt makes food pleasing to the palate; they must enlighten minds darkened by error, like the lamp in the house. This they can do best by good example; a holy life can be understood by all; it is a guide that leads to God.

Our Lord's teaching, especially on sabbath observance (pp. 78, 80), seemed to indicate a break away from the law. Such was not true. 'The law and the prophets' (Old Testament) was given to the Jews by God himself; it was irrevocable. But it was a preparation only; Jesus had come to fulfil and complete it. He was not substituting a new set of laws, but a new spirit; every minute detail ('jot, flourish') must be retained. This renewed way of life imposed just as rigorous obligations; there must be no negligence in carrying out God's law. Our Lord perfected the moral law, (1) by removing its exclusivist Jewish qualities and extending it to meet the needs of all men; (2) by emphasizing the fundamental law, the love of God and the neighbour; (3) by correcting the false interpretations of the scribes and Pharisees.

### Mount of Beatitudes June 28 A.D.

The point of this first illustration from the moral law is that hatred in the heart is just as sinful as murder; it is forbidden by the fifth commandment. The practice of using common words of abuse, like 'Raca' (probably about the same meaning as nit-wit), and 'fool,' because they are not gravely sinful, is a dangerous habit; they spring from angry thoughts, which a man should not entertain. God will punish more effectively than human tribunals ('court of justice, Council'), by eternal damnation. Moreover, a man must not only not be angry with others, he must see to it that others are not angry with him. He must be at peace with men, or God will not be at peace with him. He must not only avoid doing evil, he must do good. The Christian attitude is positive; it is summed up in the virtue of charity.

The sixth and ninth commandments were commonly understood by the Jews as a protection for the home; they restricted



woman so as to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye is the occasion of your falling into sin, pluck it out and cast it away from you; better to lose one part of your body than to have the whole cast into hell. And if your right hand is an occasion of falling, cut it off and cast it away from you; better to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body cast into hell.

‘It was said, too, “Whoever will put away his wife must first give her a writ of separation.” But I tell you that the man who puts away his wife (setting aside the matter of unfaithfulness) makes an adulteress of her, and whoever marries her after she has been put away, commits adultery.

### **We Should Be Truthful Without Oaths**

Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, “You shall not perjure yourself; you shall perform what you have sworn in the sight of the Lord.” But I tell you that you should not bind yourselves by any oath at all; not by heaven, for heaven is God’s throne; nor by earth, for earth is the footstool under his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And you shall not swear by your own head, for you have no power to turn a single hair of it white or black. Let your word be Yes for Yes, and No for No; whatever goes beyond this, comes of evil.

### **The Golden Rule**

‘You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you that you should not offer resistance to injury; if a man strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek also towards him; if he is ready to go to law with you over your coat, let him have it and your cloak with it; if he compels you to attend him on a mile’s journey, go two miles with him of your own accord. Give to every man who asks, and if a man



them either to external acts (sixth), or desires which threatened the rights of another (ninth). Our Lord clarifies the law by stating that sin is committed when the will turns from God; impure desires are wrong, independently of external actions, and even if neither person is married. The illustration from the eye and hand is not to be taken literally; it emphasizes the superiority of the spiritual (life in the kingdom) over the material; nothing, no matter how important, must be allowed to interfere with the pursuit of holiness.

Divorce was permitted by the law under certain circumstances. Jesus now cancels this permission and restores marriage to its primitive indissolubility. The meaning of 'unfaithfulness' and the whole question of divorce are treated fully in a discussion with the Pharisees later in the gospels (p. 272).

The pharisaical interpretation of the second and eighth commandments restricted the binding force of oaths to those in which the name of Yahweh was expressly invoked. They evaded contracts and obligations made under oaths such as 'by heaven'; so robbing and defrauding the common people unacquainted with all these fine distinctions. Our Lord states that such oaths are as binding as when the name of God himself is used. This attitude, so common at the time (p. 322), of bolstering up every statement with an oath ('by my head' is still a common oath among the Arabs) is not the ideal of his kingdom; a Christian should be so truthful and honest that all oaths are unnecessary.

In a primitive society, with no police force, retaliation to acts of violence and false accusations was usually made by the person concerned. The Mosaic laws tried to keep revenge within bounds by commanding that no more satisfaction be taken than the injury suffered. This is vividly expressed through the image of eye and tooth. In similar imagery of the cheek, our Lord expresses his principle and gives five examples from everyday life through which he teaches the ideal Christian attitude: a Christian



takes what is yours, do not ask him to restore it, and if a man would borrow from you, do not turn away. Do to other men all that you would have them do to you; that is the law and the prophets.

### **We Must Love Our Enemies**

‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” But I tell you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you, and pray for those who treat you insultingly, that so you may be true sons of your Father in heaven, who makes his sun rise on the evil and equally on the good, his rain fall on the just and equally on the unjust. If you love those who love you, what title have you to a reward? Will not the publicans do as much? If you greet none but your brethren, what are you doing more than others? Will not the very heathen do as much? What credit is it to you, if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much in exchange. No, it is your enemies you must love, and do them good, and lend to them, without any hope of return; then your reward will be a rich one, and you will be true sons of the most High, generous like him towards the thankless and unjust. You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### **On Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting**

‘Be sure you do not perform your acts of piety before men, for them to watch; if you do that, you have no title to a reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and in streets, to win the esteem of men. Believe me, they have their reward already. But when you give alms, you shall not so much as let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so



should not seek revenge; he should be patient when injury is done to his own person. The right way to conquer the wicked is by charity, not by retaliation. This is summed up in the final sentence, which is known to all as the Golden Rule.

This is the final illustration from the Jewish moral code. In the previous paragraph our Lord told his listeners to endure injury, not to seek revenge. He now gives the perfect attitude, the sublime Christian ideal: 'love your enemies.' It must be as positive and real as the love of the neighbour; it seeks no return of love, and functions even when spurned. No natural love could do this; it must then be supernatural, a sharing in an imitation of the love of God for all men without distinction. The Fatherhood of God is the origin and basis of the common and universal brotherhood of men. Charity is both the vital force and distinctive virtue of Christ's kingdom.

The phrase 'hate your enemy' is not found in the Mosaic law; it was, however, the official Jewish teaching. Their national isolation, to avoid contamination from the Gentiles, had led to the interpretation of 'neighbour' in the Mosaic law as a fellow Jew; all the Gentiles were classed as 'enemies' and sinners. Our Lord, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (p. 220), will define 'neighbour'; here he breaks down any distinction between friend and enemy by demanding charity to real personal enemies, Jew or Gentile.

By means of six examples from the Mosaic moral code, our Lord has just shown its true inner meaning and corrected the false ideas of the Pharisees. He now does the same for three characteristic religious practices of the Jews: 'Prayer, fasting, and alms, here is better treasure to lay up than any store of gold,' as the angel Raphael counselled Tobias (12, 8).

The Pharisees are not mentioned by name, but they are clearly meant by 'hypocrites.' In these matters it was their pride and



secret is your almsgiving to be; and then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

‘And when you pray, you are not to be like hypocrites, who love to stand praying in synagogues or at street corners, to be a mark for men’s eyes; believe me, they have their reward already. But when you are praying, go into your inner room and shut the door upon yourself, and so pray to your Father in secret; and then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

‘Again, when you fast, do not show it by gloomy looks, as the hypocrites do. They make their faces unsightly, so that men can see they are fasting; believe me, they have their reward already. But do you, at your times of fasting, anoint your head and wash your face, so that your fast may not be known to men, but to your Father who dwells in secret; and then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

### **Critical of Self, Charitable to Others**

‘Judge nobody, and you will not be judged; condemn nobody, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be yours; good measure, pressed down and shaken up and running over, will be poured into your lap. As you have judged, so you will be judged, by the same rule; the measure you award to others is the measure that will be awarded to you. How is it that you can see the speck of dust which is in your brother’s eye, and are not aware of the beam which is in your own? By what right will you say to your brother, “Wait, let me rid your eye of that speck,” when there is a beam all the while in your own? You hypocrite, take the beam out of your own eye first, and so you shall have clear sight to rid your brother’s of the speck.

‘You must not give that which is holy to dogs. Do not cast your pearls before swine, or the swine may trample



ostentation in the service of God that was rebuked by our Lord. They had put self in the place of God; their good works were a means of publicity to win the admiration and praise of men, instead of God's. Their spiritual life was run on the same lines as their business affairs—so many alms, fasts, prayers. It was a mere catalogue of exterior practices (p. 272). They had yet to learn that it is holiness of soul, the union of mind and will with God, that makes one pleasing to him. So, what is counselled is secrecy (as against publicity) and purity of intention. Their religious practices are to be perfected, not abolished.

Not all the imagery used by our Lord is meant to be taken literally. There is no evidence that the Pharisees ever blew a trumpet to draw attention to their almsgiving; it simply means, 'Don't make a show.' Likewise there is no need to anoint the head with oil when fasting; it means, 'Be cheerful and happy, like a man going to a party.' Keep your good deeds for God alone; then he will repay you (p. 326).

Our Lord returns again to the key doctrine of fraternal charity: the way you treat your neighbour is the standard God uses in his treatment of you. Man's tendency is to be critical of others and easy on self; this was especially true of the Jewish leaders, who posed as saintly men far above the sinful lives of the common people. In two illustrations, Jesus teaches the opposite conduct: concentrate on your own perfection; be generous and charitable to others. Jews used the loose folds of their cloaks as shopping bags; a generous measure of grain from the merchant is what is visualized. The Jewish mind also delighted in clashing contrasts, like the beam of wood and the speck of dust (compare 'it is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye,' p. 276).

Our Lord now issues a warning to his disciples: charitable interpretation of the conduct of others must not deceive them into thinking that all men are friendly towards them. They have bitter enemies (dogs, swine) intent on their destruction; they must



them under foot, and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

### **A Warning Against False Guides**

‘Make your way in by the narrow gate. It is a broad gate and a wide road that leads on to perdition, and those who go in that way are many indeed; but how small is the gate, how narrow the road that leads on to life, and how few there are that find it!

‘Be on your guard against false prophets, men who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but are ravenous wolves within. You will know them by the fruit they yield. Can grapes be plucked from briers, or figs from thistles? So, indeed, any sound tree will bear good fruit, while any tree that is withered will bear fruit that is worthless; that worthless fruit should come from a sound tree, or good fruit from a withered tree, is impossible. I say therefore, it is by their fruit that you will know them. Either tell us that the tree is sound and its fruit sound, or that the tree is withered and its fruit withered; the test of the tree is in its fruit. Brood of vipers, how could you speak to good effect, wicked as you are? A good man utters what is good from his heart’s store of goodness; the wicked man, from his store of wickedness, can utter nothing but what is evil; it is from the heart’s overflow that the mouth speaks. And I say this, that in the day of judgment men will be brought to account for every thoughtless word they have spoken. Your words will be matter to acquit, or matter to condemn you.

### **A House Built Upon Rock**

‘The kingdom of heaven will not give entrance to every man who calls me “Master, Master”; only to the man that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. If anyone comes to me and listens to my commandments and carries them out, I will tell you what he is like; he is like a wise



show prudence by not handing over the secrets of the kingdom ('holy, pearls') to such men.

Entry into the kingdom requires effort; it is a hard, painstaking search for a small, hidden gate into a city. There, a narrow, winding street begins; courage and perseverance are needed to follow this street. It is a way of virtue that leads to life. Only those who accept the standard of the eight beatitudes need apply. Jesus would lead nobody after him by false promises of an easy, pleasant life; he will come back to his doctrine of the cross later (p. 170).

He warns his audience against one of the main obstacles in their way, false guides. They are the Pharisees, that body of official religious teachers bent on his destruction. He calls them 'false prophets,' i.e. men wrongly claiming to speak for and safeguard the interests of God. They are hypocrites: an outward show of sanctity, but evil ruling their hearts. To no other class of men is our Lord so severe and unrelenting; 'wolves, serpents, whitened sepulchres' is a terrible judgment from his lips. His final condemnation comes on Tuesday in Holy Week (pp. 320-324).

He, who is Truth as well as Love, can make no compromise with either error or evil. It is because they have wrong ideas on the nature of the kingdom, that their guidance is false and dangerous; it cannot be otherwise, any more than a farmer can get good fruit from a withered tree, or 'figs from thistles.' Our Lord finally warns the Pharisees of their responsibility as teachers: their words will be matter for judgment as well as their deeds; the purpose of words is to teach truth, not falsehood.

Our Lord does not want his hearers just to stand and admire the beauty of his thoughts; he wants them to follow him, and live his life. They must not only know the will of God, they must do it. It is a call to action. They have to go on, observing the commandments of the law and following their customary religious



man that would build a house, who dug, dug deep, and laid his foundation on rock; and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall; it was founded upon rock. But the man who listens to what I say and does not carry it out is like a fool, who built his house upon sand; and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell at once; and great was the fall of it.'

### **Jesus Cures a Centurion's Servant**

When he had said his say in the hearing of the people, he went to Capharnaum. There was a centurion that had a servant, very dear to him, lying sick at his house, cruelly tormented with paralysis; he was then at the point of death. And he, when he was told about Jesus, sent some of the elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. And these, presenting themselves before Jesus, began to make earnest appeal to him; 'He deserves,' they said, 'to have this done for him; he is a good friend to our race, and has built our synagogue for us at his own cost.'

So Jesus set out in their company; and when he was already near the house, the centurion sent some friends to him; 'Do not put yourself to any trouble, Lord,' he said; 'I am not worthy to receive you under my roof. That is why I did not presume to come to you myself. My servant will be healed if you will only speak a word of command. I too know what it is to obey authority; I have soldiers under me, and I say, "Go," to one man, and he goes, or, "Come," to another, and he comes, or, "Do this," to my servant, and he does it.'

When he heard that, Jesus turned in amazement to the crowd which followed him, and said, 'Believe me, I have not found faith like this, even in Israel.'



duties; he has perfected them, not abolished them. His new spirit of personal sanctity does not dispense them from doing what they have been bound to do before; it gives grace and power to do it. Only habits of life, acquired by daily practice, can give that solidity and strength to stand up against the trials and persecutions in store for him, and his followers. Total adherence to his principles alone can weather the approaching storm. He will return to this later in the parable of the Sower (pp. 110-112).

### **Capharnaum June 28 A.D.**

A sick call is the first appeal to our Lord's charity on his return from the mount of Beatitudes. It is from a Roman sergeant, stationed at Capharnaum, possibly in the service of Herod Antipas; he is the first Gentile in the Galilean ministry (one other, a woman, comes in, a year later, p. 160). Nevertheless, our Lord must have brushed shoulders often enough with them in the past two months; Galilee was surrounded by Roman provinces. The main road along the western shore of the lake would see many a heathen.

There is quite a pleasant picture here of the friendly relations between Jews and Gentiles in the more tolerant life of Galilee; a good augury for the universal charity demanded by Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The centurion shows up well as a generous, benevolent man, kind to his retinue, and considerate of Jewish feeling. The local Jewish authorities are also on good terms with Jesus; they are not as rigid as the leaders from Jerusalem.

The centurion, out of deference to Jesus' position, appeals first through friendly Jews; then, remembering the strict laws prohibiting entrance to a pagan dwelling, sends another delegation. His faith in our Lord's power over the forces of nature is magnificently expressed by his illustration from the army system. Though he does not appear in person, his faith is rewarded by the immediate cure of his servant.

He has been immortalized by the use of his *Domine, non sum dignus* in the Mass: a fitting tribute to the man who built the



And the messengers, when they came back to the house, found the servant who had been sick fully recovered.

### **A Widow's Son Raised from the Dead**

And now it happened that he was going into a city called Naim, attended by his disciples and by a great crowd of people. And just as he drew near the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out to his burial; the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a crowd of folk from the city went with her. When the Lord saw her, he had pity on her, and said, 'Do not weep.' Then he went up and put his hand on the bier; and those who were carrying it stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise up.' And the dead man sat up, and spoke; and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

They were all overcome with awe, and said, praising God, 'A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people.' And this story of him was noised abroad throughout the whole of Judea and all the country round.

### **A Question from John the Baptist**

John was told of all this by his disciples. And he summoned two of his disciples, and sent them to Jesus to ask, 'Is it your coming that was foretold, or are we yet waiting for some other?'

So they presented themselves before him, and said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to ask, "Is it your coming that was foretold, or are we yet waiting for some other?"'

At the very time of their visit, Jesus rid many of their diseases and afflictions and of evil spirits, and gave many that were blind the gift of sight. Then he answered, 'Go and tell John what your own eyes and ears have witnessed; how the blind see, and the lame walk, and the lepers are made clean, and the deaf hear; how the dead are raised to life, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Blessed is he who does not lose confidence in me.'



synagogue in which our Lord was to make his promise of the Blessed Eucharist, ten months later (p. 146).

### **Nain July 28 A.D.**

This is the furthest from the lakeside that Jesus has come since he first settled there, three months before. Nain is about thirty miles from Capharnaum, but only five from Nazareth. It lies out on the plain of Esdraelon, near mount Tabor, and is visible from Nazareth; it must have been a familiar sight to Jesus ever since boyhood days. Now he was about to bring fame to this insignificant village by his first raising from the dead (see pp. 128, 284). This is the mightiest miracle yet worked by our Lord; even death is subject to him who is Lord of life.

Cemeteries were always outside the town limits; they were usually rock tombs in a hillside. The body was either wrapped in a linen shroud (as in the case of our Lord, p. 404) or buried in its own clothes (as in the case of Lazarus, p. 284 and of Dorcas, Acts 9, 36-41). Since this youth's face was probably not covered (it would be if he was enshrouded), it seems that he was being buried in his own clothes.

### **From Machaerus September 28 A.D.**

John the Baptist had been four months in the Herodian fortress of Machaerus, in the wild, remote hills, east of the Dead Sea. He kept in touch with Jesus through his disciples. The heavenly vision at the baptism left no doubt in his mind that he was the promised Messiah. But he could not help wondering, in his lonely prison, why Jesus delayed to proclaim himself in clear, ringing tones for the world to hear. Like all the Jews, he was dreaming of a glorious, majestic triumph (p. 29).

But the way of Christ is not in striking signs and external show; the kingdom must grow slowly, patiently, and gradually, as the mustard seed in the parable. So, he is not marking time; God's plan is being carried out. As proof, he appeals to the signs of Messianic times, foretold by Isaiah; they are happening now. But they must be understood correctly; not only the external act of healing, but also Jesus preaching to the neglected poor.



### Jesus Praises John the Baptist

Then, when John's messengers had gone away, he took occasion to speak of John to the crowds; 'What was it,' he asked, 'that you expected to see when you went out into the wilderness? Was it a reed trembling in the wind? No, not that; what was it you went out to see? Was it a man clad in silk? You must look in kings' palaces for men that go proudly dressed, and live in luxury. What was it, then, that you went out to see? A prophet? Yes, and something more, I tell you, than a prophet. This is the man of whom it is written, "Behold, I am sending before you that messenger of mine who is to prepare your way for your coming." Believe me, God has raised up no greater son of woman than John the Baptist; and yet to be least in the kingdom of heaven is to be greater than he. Ever since John the Baptist's time, the kingdom of heaven has opened to force; and the forceful are even now making it their prize; whereas all the prophets and the law, before John's time, could only speak of things that were to come. And this I tell you, if you will make room for it in your minds, that he is that Elias whose coming was prophesied. Listen, you that have ears to hear with.

'It is the common folk who listened to him, and the publicans, that have given to God his due, by receiving John's baptism, whereas the Pharisees and lawyers, by refusing it, have frustrated God's plan for them. To what, then, shall I compare the men of this generation? What are they like? They put me in mind of those children who call out to their companions as they sit in the market place and say, "You would not dance when we piped to you, or beat the breast when we wept for you." When John came, he would neither eat nor drink, and you say, "He is possessed." When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank with you, and of him you say, "Here is a glut-



**The Lakeside September 28 A.D.**

It would take John's disciples five or six days to cover the hundred odd miles back to Machaerus; a long, tiring journey down the hot Jordan valley in late summer. Our Lord then addressed the crowds about him by the lakeside; practically all of them had heard John's fiery oratory by the Jordan in the early months of the year (pp. 30-32). It might seem from his question that John was now wavering; so Jesus would dispel all doubts by a grand tribute to his forerunner. He praised (1) his strength of character and unshaken constancy by a graphic contrast with the reeds along the banks of the Jordan, where John used to preach; (2) his austerity of life in contrast to the luxury of the Herodian court, where he was now in prison; (3) the exalted dignity of his office: he was the Elias-messenger foretold by the prophet Malachy (pp. 172-174); his mission was the final stage of the Old Testament revelation, linking it with the New. But, great though he was, any member of Christ's kingdom is greater. John belonged to a dispensation that was only preparatory; its fulfilment and perfection is in Christ. (This is a familiar theme in St. Paul, e.g. Galatians 3, 21-29.)

As Jesus looked about him at the crowds jostling and pushing to get near him and hear his words, he pictured them as an army assaulting and capturing a citadel by force. They are the poor and lowly who 'hunger and thirst for holiness'; the common peasants, fishermen, and tax-gatherers, not the haughty Pharisees. Here again our Lord shows how closely John's mission is linked with his: the same people who followed John have accepted Jesus; those who rejected John's teaching have rejected his also.

To illustrate the Pharisees' attitude to himself and John, our Lord goes back to the games of children playing at 'weddings and funerals.' (Quite likely he had played them himself as a boy in Nazareth.) There is always a section that stubbornly refuses to play the game that is on; the Pharisees objected to the asceticism of John and to the lack of it in Jesus. They were unwilling to fit in with God's plan ('wisdom'); the common people, on the other



ton; he loves wine; he is a friend of publicans and sinners." But wisdom is vindicated by all her children.'

### A Sinful Woman in the City

One of the Pharisees invited him to a meal; so he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at table. And there was then a sinful woman in the city, who, hearing that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought a pot of ointment with her, and took her place behind him at his feet, weeping; then she began washing his feet with her tears, and drying them with her hair, kissing his feet, and anointing them with the ointment.

His host, the Pharisee, saw it, and thought to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is that is touching him, and what kind of woman, a sinner.'

But Jesus answered him thus, 'Simon, I have a word for your hearing.'

'Tell it me, Master,' he said.

'There was a creditor who had two debtors; one owed him five hundred pieces of silver, the other fifty; they had no means of paying him, and he gave them both their discharge. And now tell me, which of them will love him the more?'

'I suppose,' Simon answered, 'that it is the one who had the greater debt discharged.'

And he said, 'You have judged rightly.'

Then he turned towards the woman, and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house, and you gave me no water for my feet; she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting; she has never ceased to kiss my feet since I entered; you did not pour oil on my head; she has anointed my feet, and with ointment. And so, I tell you, if great sins have been forgiven her, she has also greatly



hand, eagerly accepted it. These play at whatever game God wants them to; they are his true, obedient children.

### Magdala September 28 A.D.

The purpose of Christ's kingdom was to save men from sin. This scene illustrates how the poor and outcast, conscious of their need of redemption, were forcing their way into the kingdom, while the proud Pharisees, self-satisfied and feeling no need of reform, remained outside.

The Pharisees in Galilee were not as antagonistic as those that had been sent from Jerusalem. Our Lord's popularity with the crowd also demanded some show of deference on their part. Simon may even have felt some sympathy with Jesus; but his omission of the normal courtesies indicated a coolness in his welcome. Such banquets were usually held towards sunset, when the cool breeze from the west gave some relief from the oppressive heat of the lakeside. It was a public function at which conversation was more important than eating; the house was open to villagers to come in and listen to the wisdom of the doctors of the law.

Before Simon and his fellow Pharisees could start a discussion, a woman of immoral life caused a most distressing incident. She had been converted by the words of Jesus, but had not yet spoken her thanks. This banquet was her opportunity to let him know, not by words but by an affectionate service to his person. She intended at first only to anoint his feet with perfume. Her emotions overcame her when she saw that his bare feet, as he reclined at table, were still covered with the dust of travel; and the other guests, too, were cool and distant to him. She could not tolerate such treatment of One she loved.

Our Lord took advantage of this occasion to pose a simple but pointed problem. In it he skilfully contrasted Simon's coldness and the woman's love. He had three things to do: (1) He had to vindicate himself by showing that he knew Simon's thoughts, and that the woman was no longer a sinner when she washed his feet, she had already repented. (2) He had to show his dis-



loved. He loves little, who has little forgiven him.'

Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'

And his fellow guests thereupon thought to themselves, 'Who is this, that he even forgives sins?'

But he told the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

### **An Attempt to Restrain Jesus**

Then followed a time in which he went on journeying from one city or village to another, preaching and spreading the good news of God's kingdom. With him were the twelve apostles, and certain women, whom he had freed from evil spirits and from sicknesses, Mary who is called Magdalen, who had had seven devils cast out of her, and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them with the means they had.

And now he came into a house, and once more the crowd gathered so that they had no room even to sit and eat. When word came to his own family, they went out to restrain him; men were saying, 'He must be mad.' Then his mother and his brethren came and sent a message to him, calling him to them, while they stood outside. There was a crowd sitting round him when someone told him, 'Here are your mother and your brethren standing outside, looking for you.'

But he made answer to the man that brought him the news, 'Who is a mother, who are brethren to me?'

Then he looked about at those who were sitting around him, and stretched out his hand towards his disciples, and said, 'Here are my mother and my brethren! If anyone does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.'



approval of the discourteous reception given him by Simon; this he did firmly, but with graciousness and urbanity. (3) He had to reinstate the woman, while admitting her sinful past. He publicly makes known that her sins have been forgiven, but he does so with such assurance that it is apparent to all he is claiming a power which is the property of God alone.

### **Capharnaum October 28 A.D.**

Six months had passed since Jesus first settled at Capharnaum. For most of that time he had been travelling from one town of Galilee to another, with his twelve apostles. The weather was hot and dry (no rain falls from May till October), and there would be no great hardship in this nomadic existence, even if they were forced to stay out in the open at night. Judas was appointed treasurer, and all funds were common property. Some assistance was also provided by certain grateful women, as well as some of the apostles' relatives. The best known of the three named here, Mary of Magdala, is generally identified with the sinful woman of the previous scene; Luke left her anonymous out of reverence for a woman prominent in the Christian community; the seven devils is a Hebrew expression for her notoriously sinful life. She is also to be identified with Martha's sister, Mary of Bethany (p. 299).

The family elders at Nazareth did not look with favour upon this way of life led by our Lord; for the sake of the family name, Jesus should lead a more normal, respectable life. People were starting to talk about and ridicule his exaggerated zeal. So, as a result of a conference of the clan, a deputation was sent to stop his folly. Our Lady undoubtedly did not share these sentiments of her kinsfolk; she had complete trust in her Son.

Our Lord's reply emphasizes the importance of his new spiritual family; it transcends the limitations of natural ties to include all mankind. It is union of mind and will with God that makes one the closest relation of Jesus Christ.



## Chapter 5: Parables of the Kingdom



FROM childhood every Hebrew was familiar with the parable form of instruction. It had been popularized by the writings and sayings of king Solomon, about 1,000 B.C. It is a simple and primitive technique: a description of the familiar things of daily life, with a deeper meaning hidden within. The oriental mind delighted in probing and searching for this hidden lesson. The story form in which it was told made it easy to remember; its enigmatic nature stimulated thought and provoked enquiry. It was both obvious and obscure, with all the fascination of a simple but ingenious puzzle. The Jewish rabbis made great use of it in their instructions; yet none of their parables approach that simplicity and vividness so characteristic of our Lord's.

It would seem that our Lord now began this form of instruction for the first time. It marked a definite stage in his ministry; a caution and care in describing his kingdom, because of the false picture in the minds of his hearers. Had he told them in plain language what his kingdom was to be (especially its universality, the call of the Gentiles), they would have rejected him at once. The crowds had been following him for more than six months; his personality, his eloquence, and his miracles had captivated them; but their ideas had not been changed. They must, then, be taught to think, to reason, and so to understand and accept his kingdom. This is the purpose of the parables. The truth is there, but hidden; the crowds will puzzle over and remember these picturesque stories when many other sayings of his will have been long forgotten. In the course of time, those who are rightly disposed will see, and understand. In the meantime he can continue his instructions before the very eyes of those Pharisees who are watching to catch him out in his words, and so bring about his death.

Thirty of our Lord's parables are recorded in the gospels (also thirty miracles). Eight of them are given here as a group; they could quite easily have been spoken in one day—Parable Day. Four of them, concerned with the sowing of crops, seem to indicate the time of the early winter rains, which fall in November.



### The Parable of the Sower

That day, leaving the house, Jesus sat down by the sea shore, and great crowds gathered about him, so that he went on board a boat and sat there instead, while all the people remained on the land, at the sea's edge. And he spoke to them long, in parables: 'Listen,' his teaching began, 'here is the sower gone out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some grains chanced to fall beside the path, so that they were trodden underfoot, and the birds flew down and ate them. And others fell on rocky land, where the soil was shallow; these sprang up all at once, because they had not sunk deep in the ground; and when the sun rose they were parched; they had taken no root, and so they withered away. Some fell among briars, so that the briars grew up with them and smothered them, and they gave no crop. But others fell where the soil was good and these sprouted and grew, and yielded a harvest; some of them thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some a hundredfold.'

So saying, he cried aloud, 'Listen, you that have ears to hear with.'

### Why Our Lord Spoke in Parables

When they could speak with him alone, the twelve and the disciples who were with him came to him, and said, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?'

'Because,' he answered, 'it is granted to you to understand the secrets of God's kingdom, but not to these others. And if I talk to them in parables, it is because, though they have eyes, they cannot see, and though they have ears, they cannot hear or understand. Indeed, in them the prophecy of Isaias is fulfilled, "You will listen and listen, but for you there is no understanding; you will watch and watch, but for you there is no perceiving. The heart of this people has become dull, their ears are slow to listen, and they keep their eyes shut, so that they may never see with



**Ain Tinch November 28 A.D.**

The location of all eight parables is probably the rocky promontory between Ain Tinch and Tabgha. Six months before, our Lord used Simon's boat as a pulpit in this same place (p. 68). It is now the time of the early rains. Gray clouds fill the sky, and the farmers are busy scratching the reddish-brown earth with their primitive wooden ploughs, pulled by a yoke of oxen. It is the time to sow wheat and barley, the two important grain crops in Palestine. There are no fenced paddocks; a cairn of stones is all there is to mark boundaries. In one plot of ploughed ground, there is the fertile soil of the plain of Genesareth, and the less fertile slopes of the rocky hillside. Running across the field are tracks and rights of way, trodden hard by animals and men; the plough scarcely marks them. The sower sows his wheat broadcast from an apron-sack round his waist; the sparrows and pigeons follow him as he walks along. The cause of the sudden growth on rocky soil is that moisture remains on the surface. 'Bricks' stand for thorns and thistles, a new growth that comes up with the wheat. The average yield from good soil by the lakeside is about fortyfold; a hundredfold would be a bumper crop.

**Capharnaum November 28 A.D.**

This question was put to our Lord only at the end of the day, when they had returned to the house at Capharnaum. Often before he had illustrated his teaching with vivid pictures from nature; but now his whole discourse was made up of parables. It was so unusual to hear the Master using such puzzling language. More than that, he seemed to be deliberately hiding the meaning of his words. His reply confirmed this. The crowds were more interested in miracles than a supernatural life of holiness; they would accept him only in so far as he satisfied their false and settled views of the Messianic kingdom.

And among them were his enemies, the Pharisees, waiting for the words from his mouth that would convict him. But these parables of his could not be used as evidence in court. There is



those eyes, or hear with those ears, or understand with that heart, and turn back to me, and win healing from me.” ’

### **Explanation of the Parable of the Sower**

Then he said to them, ‘You do not understand this parable? And are these the men who are to understand all parables? The parable means this; the seed is God’s word. Those by the wayside are those who have the word sown in them, but no sooner have they heard it than the devil comes, and takes away this word that was sown in their hearts, so that they cannot find faith and be saved. In the same way, those who take in the seed in rocky ground are those who entertain the word with joy as soon as they hear it, and yet have no root in themselves; they last for a time, but afterwards, when tribulation or persecution arises over the word, their faith is soon shaken. And there are others who take in the seed in the midst of briers; they are those who hear the word, but allow the cares of this world and the false charms of riches and the pleasures of life to smother the word, so that it remains fruitless. And those who take in the seed in good soil are those who hear the word and welcome it, and hold by it with a noble and generous heart, and endure, and yield a harvest, one grain thirtyfold, one sixtyfold, one a hundredfold.’

### **Apostles Must Be Teachers**

And he said to them, ‘Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel measure, or under a bed, not in the lamp-stand? What is hidden, is hidden only so that it may be revealed; what is kept secret, is kept secret only that it may come to light. Listen, all of you that have ears to hear with.’

And he said to them, ‘Look well, then, how you listen. In the measure in which you open your hands, you will be paid, and more will be given you besides. If a man is rich, gifts will be made to him, and his riches will abound;



great drama here: our Lord speaking his secrets to men, who, though they were all ears, yet could not understand.

All could follow the story of the seed-sowing, but not even his disciples saw the deeper meaning. They knew he was teaching something important, not painting vivid pictures merely to interest the crowd. Every parable had a hidden meaning; it was important that his chosen followers should know what it was; their duty was to carry his teaching to all nations. The great 'secret' of this story was that the seed of God's grace, the life-giving power that was to bring the kingdom into existence, was to be scattered broadcast: all men, represented by the different kinds of soil, were to have an opportunity of entry. It was not to be restricted to the Jews: 'through the gospel preaching the Gentiles are to win the same inheritance in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 3, 6).

The only qualities required for membership are right dispositions of mind and will; any person who accepts the standard of the eight beatitudes (p. 86) is suitable soil for God's grace. So our Lord cuts right across the Jewish conviction that no personal qualification beyond descent from Abraham is required for membership in the kingdom. He further points out three common obstacles to the fructifying of divine grace: hardness, shallowness, and entanglement; added to these is the enmity of the devil.

These words are addressed to the apostles as the future teachers of our Lord's doctrine. His teaching is hidden now, because the time has not come yet for open promulgation; it is hidden only temporarily (p. 232). Their work is to make the light of his doctrine shine clearly and openly for all the world to see. It is important, then, that they listen closely, and thoroughly grasp the inner meaning of his parables. Their present attention is compared to a measure: the more knowledge they can acquire now, the more fitted they will be to teach others later. God will help them abundantly, but not by any miraculous infusion of knowl-



if he is poor, even the little he has will be taken away from him.'

### Parable of the Growing Crop

And he said to them, 'The kingdom of heaven is like this; it is as if a man should sow a crop in his land, and then go to sleep and wake again, night after night, day after day, while the crop sprouts and grows, without any knowledge of his. So, of its own accord, the ground yields its increase, first the blade, then the ear, then the perfect grain in the ear; and when the fruit appears, then it is time for him to put in the sickle, because now the harvest is ripe.'

### Parable of the Darnel

And he put before them another parable; 'Here is an image,' he said, 'of the kingdom of heaven. There was a man who sowed his field with clean seed; but while all the world was asleep, an enemy of his came and scattered darnel seed among the wheat, and was gone. So, when the blade had sprung up and come into ear, the weeds, too, showed up for what they were; and the farmer's men went to him and said, "Sir, was it not clean seed you sowed in your field? How comes it, then, that there is darnel in it?"'

'He said, "An enemy has done it."

'And his men asked him, "Would you then have us go and gather the weeds up?"'

'But he said, "No; or perhaps while you are gathering the weeds you will root up the wheat with them. Leave them to grow side by side till harvest, and when harvest-time comes I will give word to the reapers, Gather up the weeds first, and tie them in bundles to be burned, and store the wheat in my barn." '

Then he sent the crowds away, and went back into the



**edge.** It is just as in human affairs: the more a man possesses, the more likely is he to be favoured with more presents.

**Ain Tineh November 28 A.D.**

This parable is addressed to the crowds again. It is found only in St. Mark. It is meant to combat the false Jewish idea of the kingdom being inaugurated with a sudden, dramatic manifestation of God's power: it will be a gradual growth. This has special import for the Galilean disciples, so anxious to hasten things along. When our Lord is no longer with them, and seems to have forgotten them, let them remain calm and confident; the kingdom will grow as surely and infallibly as does wheat in the ground. Christ will not intervene visibly again until the Last Judgment.

This parable is familiar to us from the Douay Version as the Cockle. It is known to readers of the Authorized Version as the Tares; and that is how Monsignor Knox translates it. The Greek word is Zizania, corresponding to the Hebrew Zunin, a noxious, narcotic weed indistinguishable from wheat until the ears are formed. Its botanical name is Lolium Temulentum, and its closest relative in this country is Darnel. This weed best fits the details of the parable, and its application by our Lord. It is meant to correct the false Jewish idea of a kingdom consisting solely of holy members; there was to be no room for sinners in their earthly millennium. The main error in this Jewish picture is the failure to distinguish between the church on earth and the blessed in heaven; between the first coming of Christ to redeem mankind, and the second coming, at the end of the world, to judge them. So, our Lord's chief lesson is that both good and evil men will exist together in the kingdom, and often be indistinguishable from each other.

It is a solemn warning to the apostles to expect opposition and danger not only from without, but even from within the fold; the presence of Judas among them must not shake their faith; the Master has forewarned them in this parable. Also they are told



house. There his disciples came to him, and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.'

He answered, 'It is the Son of Man that sows the good seed. The field is the world, and the sons of the kingdom are the good seed; the sons of the wicked one are the weeds. The enemy that sowed them is the devil, and the end of the world is the harvest; it is reaped by the angels. The weeds were gathered together and burned in the fire, and so it will be when the world is brought to an end; the Son of Man will give charge to his angels, and they will gather up all that gives offence in his kingdom, all those who do wickedly in it, and will cast them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then, at last, the just will shine out, clear as the sun, in their Father's kingdom. Listen, you that have ears to hear with.'

### **Mustard Seed, Leaven, Treasure, Pearl, Net**

He said, 'What is there that bears a likeness to the kingdom of heaven? To what image are we to compare it? To a grain of mustard seed, that a man has taken and planted in his garden; of all seeds, none is so little, but when it grows up it is greater than any garden herb; it grows into a tree, so that all the birds come and settle in its branches.'

And again, he said, 'What comparison shall I find for the kingdom of heaven? It is like leaven, that a woman has taken and buried away in a bushel of flour, enough to leaven the whole batch.'

'The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field; a man has found it and hidden it again, and now, for the joy it gives him, is going home to sell all that he has and buy that field.'

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is as if a trader were looking for rare pearls; and now he has found one pearl



that the real enemy of the kingdom is the devil; a much more subtle and dangerous foe than Rome. He does not sleep; he is out to destroy, and his activity is so secret and cunning that it goes long unrecognized. Since it is so difficult to know who are under his influence, it would do more harm than good to try and exterminate them. Virtue is to be practised in patiently enduring evil, and in trusting to God's providence; at the end he will vindicate his faithful followers. Their work is the salvation and sanctification of men, not their destruction.

The emphasis in the parable on the judgment and final destruction of the wicked (almost half the text) seems to be one of the many warnings given especially for Judas: membership in the kingdom is no guarantee of eternal life. Jesus, as judge, will punish sin by eternal damnation. His charity and kindness must not be mistaken for indifference to sin. It is the time of salvation now, but the time of judgment will surely come.

Five brief parables are here grouped together. Jesus, the Teacher, is searching for new illustrations to bring home to his audience what his kingdom really is. The last of these parables, the Net, is a twin to the Weeds; it has exactly the same lesson. The Weeds was for the farmers, the Net for the fishermen. The remaining four parables are also grouped in pairs; the Mustard Seed, again, for the farmers, the Leaven for the women. The gradual growth, not the sudden appearance of a fully-formed kingdom, is the lesson of both. The Treasure and the Pearl have also the one lesson: the need of search and sacrifice to gain possession of the kingdom.

All five keep in mind the Jewish ideal, and are meant to counteract its falsity. The Mustard Seed tells them that the kingdom will not arrive in a blaze of glory, as the Lord gave the law on mount Sinai. It will have small beginnings, hidden and almost unnoticed, like his birth at Bethlehem; it will grow up in a world that does not suspect what is going on, like his life at Nazareth; but it will grow; and so great will it grow that all can



of great cost, and has sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea, and enclosed fish of every kind at once; when it was full, the fishermen drew it up, and sat down on the beach, where they stored all that was worth keeping in their buckets, and threw the useless kind away. So it will be when the world is brought to an end; the angels will go out and separate the wicked from the just, and will cast them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.’

### **Our Lord Spoke Many Other Parables**

All this Jesus said to the people in parables, and would say it in parables only, so fulfilling the words which were spoken by the prophet, ‘I will speak my mind in parables, I will give utterance to things which have been kept secret from the beginning of the world.’ And he used many parables of this kind, such as they could listen to easily, in preaching the word to them; to them he spoke only in parables, and made all plain to his disciples when they were alone.

‘Have you grasped all this?’

‘Yes, Lord,’ they said to him.

And he said to them, ‘Every scholar, then, whose learning is of the kingdom of heaven must be like a rich man, who knows how to bring both new and old things out of his treasure-house.’



find shelter in it (an allusion to the call of the Gentiles). Whereas the mustard seed absorbs and takes in from outside, the leaven is an energy that radiates from within; it is a spiritual force that influences, not by force of arms from without, but by enlightening the minds and transforming the lives of men. The Jews thought of the kingdom as coming in such splendour that it could not escape notice; it would be so obvious and compelling that there would be no need for personal effort. The Treasure and Pearl correct this. These two parables also show that the kingdom has a value and a beauty far exceeding all worldly possessions.

### **The Lakeside November 28 A.D.**

These eight parables are only a sample of our Lord's teaching; he continued to use such figurative and veiled language when speaking of his kingdom. Although he explained all to his apostles, only three such are given in the gospels. St. Matthew sees in his use of parables a parallel in the scriptures; Asaph ('the prophet') used well known facts (the history of Israel) to point a lesson hidden there; so Jesus tells his 'secret' through facts obvious in natural history, observable by all.

Our Lord finally reminds his apostles not to neglect the teachings of the Old Testament; it has been perfected, not destroyed. God's treasure-house of revelation contains many antiques, which take on a new beauty and meaning in the light of the gospel. The apostles must be able to show how the old law was a preparation for the coming of Christ; the Jews will more readily accept his kingdom when they see that it was foretold by the prophets.



## Chapter 6: Messianic Crisis



THIS is the final chapter for the crowds in Galilee. They have been following our Lord now for almost a year, growing in numbers and enthusiasm. At the end of this chapter they are put to the test, and they fail. Our Lord wanted them to believe and trust him as one sent by God for their redemption; they still looked for an armed revolt against Rome.

With great patience our Lord tried to raise the minds of the crowd to understand the purpose of his coming: he was both their Messiah and their God. He went slowly and cautiously, letting his teaching infiltrate; he healed their sick, and lived a life of hardship, simply, as one of them. In the Sermon on the Mount he showed where real happiness lay, in the conquest of self and sinful tendencies not in worldly ambition and wealth; that holiness was a personal relationship of man's mind and will with God, not a hypocritical observance of regulations and precepts.

By his parables he urged them on to think for themselves; his kingdom was useless to them unless they were willing to enter it. All the time, he kept in mind the false, material, nationalistic picture, and emphasized the spiritual, universal nature of his kingdom. He tried to convince them that the real enemy was sin, not Rome; he waged war on the demons; suffering and death, two effects of sin, were overcome by his divine power of miracles.

And the sad climax came when he worked his most outstanding miracle, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Their old habits of thought came to the surface again; they had profited little from his teaching. They would accept him only if he conformed to their ideas of the Messiah and his kingdom; they would not submit and allow him to lead them as he wished.

And finally, in the synagogue at Capharnaum, he made the greatest demand on them, one which only God could make; it was the great test of faith, the Blessed Eucharist. A time must come for all men when they have the choice of accepting God or rejecting him; it had come now, after the most skilled Teacher of all time had prepared them for almost a year by word and example.



### Jesus Calms the Storm at Sea

That day, when evening came on, seeing how great were the crowds about him, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go across to the other side of the lake.' So they left the crowd and took him with them, just as he was, on the boat; there were other boats too with him. And while they were sailing, a great storm of wind came down upon the lake, and drove the waves into the boat, so that the boat could hold no more. Meanwhile, he was in the stern, asleep on the pillow there; and they roused him crying, 'Master, are you unconcerned? Master, Master, save us, we are sinking.'

But Jesus said to them, 'Why are you faint-hearted? Have you still no faith?'

Then he rose up, and checked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind dropped, and there was deep calm.

And they were overcome with awe; 'What kind of man is this,' they said to one another, 'who is obeyed even by the winds and the sea?'

### Jesus Drives Out a Legion of Devils

So they came to the further shore of the sea, in the country of the Gerasenes, which is on the coast opposite Galilee. And here, as soon as he had disembarked, he was met by a possessed man, who came out of the rock tombs, so exceedingly fierce that none could pass along that road. This man for a long time had gone naked, and lived homeless among the tombs, and nobody could keep him bound any longer, even with chains. He had been bound with fetters and chains often before, but had torn the chains apart and broken the fetters, and nobody had the strength to control him. Thus he spent all his time, night and day, among the tombs and the hills, crying aloud and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from far off, he ran up and fell at his feet, and cried



**Lake of Galilee December 28 A.D.**

After a day of parables, our Lord was tired. The crowds would give him no rest; so he decided to escape for a while, at the same time giving the people across the lake an opportunity to hear the news of salvation. Immediately, the fishermen disciples took charge, arranging their nets and placing the crew; Jesus humbly obeyed their orders. They all packed into one fishing boat, hoisted the sail and moved out to sea, with a happy feeling of having the Master to themselves for a change. The light westerly breeze that usually springs up at sunset was ideal for sailing; it was so quiet and peaceful that our Lord fell asleep. He was so tired that he slept on even when the gale struck them suddenly, without warning, blowing with an icy chill from mount Hermon in the north. The other boats had not followed as far as this; they were alone, and afraid, even with Jesus in the boat.

There is dramatic contrast between the familiar, human Jesus, sound asleep (this is the only time the gospels record him sleeping), and his divine authority to command the forces of nature. Here was something new, entirely different from healing the sick and casting out devils.

**Gerasa (Kursi) December 28 A.D.**

It was next morning that this scene took place. It would seem, then, that the apostles had spent the whole night on the lake. Seeing that it is only seven miles across, four hours would be ample time to make the crossing, even allowing time off for the storm, consequent bailing out of the boat, and repairs. So there are still four hours to account for, unless we have them arriving in the dark. Lagrange thinks that they spent the time after the storm, fishing; it seems a reasonable suggestion.

The stilling of the storm had shown the apostles that Jesus was Master of nature; this scene showed them how completely he also controlled the world of spirits. Eight individuals are freed from diabolical possession by our Lord; they are all anonymous, except Mary Magdalen. In only two cases is much detail given; this possessed man is one; the epileptic boy near Caesarea Philippi,



with a loud voice, 'Why do you meddle with me, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure you in God's name, do not torment me' (for he was saying, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit').

Then he asked him, 'What is your name?'

The spirit told him, 'My name is Legion; there are many of us.' And they entreated him not to bid them go back to the abyss. There, at the foot of the mountain, was a great herd of swine feeding; and the devils asked a favour of him. 'Send us into the swine, let us make our lodging there.'

He said to them, 'Away with you'; and they came out and went into the herd of swine; and with that, all the herd rushed down the cliff into the sea, some two thousand in number, and the sea drowned them. The herdsmen fled when they saw it happen, and spread the news of it in the city and about the countryside; so that they came out to see what had happened for themselves. When they reached Jesus, they found the man from whom the devils had been driven out sitting there, clothed and restored to his wits, at Jesus' feet; and they were terrified. Then those who had seen it told them the story of the possessed man, and what had happened to the swine. Then all the common folk of the country round Gerasa asked Jesus to leave them, such fear had gripped them. So he embarked on the boat; and as he did so the man who had been possessed was eager to go with him, but Jesus would not give him leave; 'Go home to your friends,' he said, 'and tell them all that the Lord has done for you, and what great mercy he showed you.'

So he went back and began to spread word in Decapolis of what Jesus had done for him; and all wondered at it.

### **The Woman with an Issue of Blood**

When Jesus returned by boat across the sea to his own city, he found the people there to greet him; they had all



eight months later, is the other (p. 174).

The reality of the devil's power was most obvious to all when he took physical possession of a man; it was a continual reminder of the tyranny of man's greatest enemy, and showed their need of a Redeemer to free them from Satan's domination. The devil cannot act directly on man's soul (that is, his mind and will), but he can, with God's permission, possess and control the body and its faculties. In possession the normal control of the individual's mind and will over his physical actions and senses is suspended; they are given over to the use of the possessing spirit. It is he that speaks and acts. He is morally responsible for the man's actions during possession; the man may have lived a good life before, and still enjoy God's friendship during possession. In five of the eight cases in the gospels, the possessed person also suffered from physical diseases: blindness, deafness, dumbness, frenzy, and epilepsy. As soon as the devil was cast out, these ailments also disappeared.

The request of 'Legion' to enter the pigs was a ruse; they wanted to enjoy the freedom of remaining on earth to further their work of opposition; they did not foresee that the pigs would panic. The same frenzy as that of the possessed man came upon them. This destruction is best explained by our Lord's right as God over all his creation; God owns all things. The hills on the eastern shore of the lake are steep and barren, coming down to within thirty yards of the water's edge. Consequently it was never closely settled; there were only two towns. One of these is the village named in this incident; it is probably represented by the modern place name Kursi (Gerasa). The bulk of the population lived on the plateau further east; although only about a quarter of them were Jews, the possessed man was most likely one. To him was given the distinction of being, though in a restricted sense, the first apostle to the Gentile world (the Decapolis, a federation of ten cities, was a Greek colony on the eastern Jewish border).

### **Capharnaum December 28 A.D.**

Jesus' boat was under observation during the whole of the re-



been awaiting him. And while he was still by the sea, one of the rulers of the synagogue came up, Jairus by name, and fell down at his feet when he saw him, pleading for his aid; he had an only daughter, who was dying. 'My daughter,' he said, 'is at the point of death; come and lay your hand on her, that so she may recover, and live.'

So Jesus rose up and went after him, and so did his disciples; and a great crowd followed him, and pressed close upon him. And now a woman who for twelve years had had an issue of blood, and had undergone much from many physicians, spending all she had on them, and no better for it, but rather grown worse, came up behind Jesus in the crowd (for she had been told of him), and touched the hem of his cloak; 'If I can even touch his cloak,' she said to herself, 'I shall be healed.' And immediately the source of the bleeding dried up, and she felt in her body that she had been cured of her affliction.

Jesus thereupon, inwardly aware of the power that had proceeded from him, turned back towards the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my garments?'

All disclaimed it; 'Master,' said Peter and his companions, 'the crowds are hemming you in and pressing close about you, and can you ask, "Who touched me?"'

But Jesus said, 'Somebody touched me; I can tell that power has gone out from me.'

But he looked round him to catch sight of the woman who had done this. And now the woman, finding that there was no concealment, came forward trembling and fell at his feet, and so told him before all the people of her reason for touching him, and of her sudden cure.

Whereupon Jesus said to her, 'My daughter, your faith has brought you recovery; go in peace, and be rid of your affliction.'

### **The Raising of Jairus' Daughter**

While he was yet speaking, messengers came from the



turn crossing, which probably took place the same day as the preceding incident. The people of Capharnaum crowded round, giving him a warm welcome in contrast to the cool reception of the Gerasenes. One man in particular thought that the boat would never arrive; he was Jairus, the third citizen of some standing in Capharnaum to seek a miracle from our Lord (pp. 62, 98).

The woman with an embarrassing haemorrhage (equivalent to chronic menstruation) is a distraction from the main story. Jewish medical literature gives a sizeable list of prescriptions for this disease; they range from superstitious practices, such as carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen bag, to rare and expensive drugs. The woman had tried them all. St. Luke, himself a doctor, omits this sarcastic comment on the physicians. It was not, however, through embarrassment that she approached so stealthily; Jewish law made her 'unclean.' Had her condition been known, the crowd would have driven her away like a leper (Leviticus 15, 25-30). Our Lord's seeming lack of consideration for her feelings is simply explained: it was an important lesson for his disciples, the crowd, and the woman, who must be shown that faith, not a furtive touch, had won the cure from him.

The Mosaic law (Numbers 15, 38-39) prescribed four tassels to be hung on blue cords from the bottom hem of the cloak, as a reminder of God's law. Jesus observed this, as a loyal Jew. Even in the midst of great miracles, his human nature is clearly shown; he is pushed about and jostled by the crowd; Peter has no hesitation in giving him some good advice; and he has to ask questions to find out who has benefited by his miracle. Of course he knew what miracle he had worked, and who had been healed, because it could not have happened had he not willed it. But he had not seen the woman with his human eyes; and he followed the common rule of human nature in acquiring knowledge from experience. Had the woman disappeared in the crowd, he would not have known, by natural knowledge, who she was. An early legend claims that her name was Veronica.

Jesus stopped to heal the woman; he was never in too great a



ruler's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead; why do you trouble the Master any longer?'

Jesus heard it, and said to him openly, 'Do not be afraid; you have only to believe, and she will recover.'

And now he would not let anyone follow him, except Peter and James and James' brother John; and so they came to the ruler's house, where he found a great stir, mourners playing the flute, and much weeping and lamentation. And he went in and said to them, 'What is this stir, this weeping? Make room there; the child is not dead, she is asleep.'

They laughed aloud at him; but he sent them all out, and, taking the child's father and mother and his own companions with him, went in to where the child lay. Then he took hold of the child's hand, and said to her, 'Talitha koum,' which means, 'Maiden, I say to you, rise up.' And she rose up there and then with life restored to her, and began to walk; she was twelve years old. He ordered that she should be given something to eat, and warned her parents, who were beside themselves with wonder, to let no one hear of what had befallen.

And the story of these doings spread abroad through all the country round.

### **Two Blind Men Cured**

As Jesus was passing further on his way, he was followed by two blind men, who cried aloud, 'Son of David, have pity on us.'

These blind men came to him when he had gone into his lodging, and Jesus said to them, 'Have you the faith to believe that I can do this?'

And they said to him, 'Yes, Lord.'

Thereupon, he touched their eyes, and said, 'Your faith shall not be disappointed.'

Then their eyes were opened; and Jesus laid a strict



hurry to help a soul in need. The death of the girl had altered the situation; it was not now a question of healing, but of raising from the dead. The cure of the woman could be made public without any danger to Jesus' mission; but the raising of the dead might easily precipitate a Messianic crisis. It must be kept secret. The miracle at Naim had taken place five months before, thirty miles away (p. 98); such a great wonder had not yet been worked by the lakeside. How little the citizens of 'his own city' believed in him is shown by the scorn and mockery of Jairus' friends, and the mourners waiting inside the house. They had not the least suspicion that the Lord of life and death was walking through the doorway of this house in Capharnaum.

The three apostles chosen to witness this miracle were probably more fitted to understand and keep silent. They are the inner circle, who will be privileged to see both his Transfiguration (p. 170), and his Agony (p. 372). Peter will surely remember this scene when he confesses Jesus' divinity, seven months later. Our Lord's command to give the girl some food relieves a tense situation and brings the transfixed parents back to normal. It is also a picturesque touch, showing his personal interest in the young girl; for him, people, not miracles, are the important thing. It is purely a coincidence that the girl's age is the same number of years as the time the woman had suffered under her affliction.

Our Lord is still at Capharnaum for this incident. Since it is recorded only by St. Matthew, who rarely mentions indoor scenes, Lagrange thinks it took place in his house. In this same dwelling Matthew had given a banquet, after his conversion, in the early days of the Galilean ministry (p. 72). Some think that it, rather than Peter's home, or the house where our Lady lived (pp. 67, 71), became our Lord's headquarters at Capharnaum.

Two blind people together was not an unusual sight; they could assist one another (though our Lord made a pertinent observation on this very point, p. 160); they were companions in distress.



charge on them, telling them, 'Be sure nobody hears of this.' But they had no sooner gone out than they talked of him in all the country round.

### **Jesus Rejected by His Own People**

Then he left the place, and withdrew to his own countryside, his disciples following him. Here, when the sabbath came, he began teaching in the synagogue, and many were astonished when they heard him; 'How did he come by all this?' they asked. 'What is the meaning of this wisdom that has been given to him, of all these wonderful works that are done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Jude and Simon? Do not his sisters live here near us?' And they had no confidence in him.

Then he said to them, 'No doubt you will tell me, as the proverb says, "Physician, heal yourself; do here in your own country all that we have heard of your doing at Capharnaum."'

Then Jesus said to them, 'It is only in his own country, in his own home, and among his own kindred, that a prophet goes unhonoured. Why, you may be sure of this, there were many widows among the people of Israel in the days of Elias, when a great famine came over all the land, after the heavens had remained shut for three years and six months, but Elias was not sent to any of these. He was sent to a widow woman in Sarepta, which belongs to Sidon. And there were many lepers among the people of Israel in the days of the prophet Eliseus; but it was none of them, it was Naaman the Syrian who was made clean.

All those who were in the synagogue were full of indignation at hearing this; they rose up and thrust him out of the city, and took him up to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, to throw him over it. But he



Their use of the title 'Son of David' shows a belief in Jesus as the Messiah; it is likewise used by the blind Bartimaeus at Jericho (p. 292). Their faith is amply rewarded.

**Nazareth December 28 A.D.**

It is now late in December (maybe the 25th, Jesus' thirty-second birthday). This is his second recorded visit to Nazareth. He preached in the synagogue there at the opening of his Galilean campaign, eight months earlier (p. 62). He met with a warm welcome then; it is a different story now. The cause of this changed attitude is the narrow-minded jealousy of the townspeople. He had left his home town for another city; this was a slight on the humble place of his boyhood. Why should Capernaum and not Nazareth benefit from his miracles, and the popular acclaim of all Israel? Jealousy leads to resentment and animosity. They decide that they do not want him; he is of no account anyhow; a working man whom they have known since childhood; his family and background are quite ordinary. Who does he think he is? They are blind both to his divine Personality and the spirituality of his kingdom. They have no faith; and faith is the first step into the kingdom.

This rejection by the Nazarenes is typical of the national attitude to Jesus. It is the first sign of what is to come: 'They who were his own gave him no welcome.' It will be an example to his disciples when they are rejected like their Master; it will also remind them to turn to the Gentiles. For that is the point of our Lord's illustration from Elias and Eliseus: God's mercy was shown to the heathen because the Jews had no faith; and faith is an essential condition of his favours. There is local colour in the choice of these two prophets; the scene of their labours was the plain of Esdraelon, and the hills of Samaria, on which the Nazarenes looked every day of their lives.

It is of Catholic faith that our Lady remained always a virgin; Jesus had no brothers or sisters. Among Semites, even today, these words are used for near relatives, as well as true brothers and sisters. Cleophas (same as Alphacus) was probably St.



passed through their midst, and so went his way. Nor could he do any wonderful works there, except that he laid his hands on a few who were sick, and cured them; he was astonished at their unbelief.

### The Sending Out of the Twelve

So Jesus went about all their cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every kind of disease and infirmity. Yet still, when he looked at the crowds, he was moved with pity for them, seeing them harried and abject, like sheep that have no shepherd. Thereupon he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful enough, but the labourers are few; you must ask the Lord to whom the harvest belongs to send labourers out for the harvesting.'

And he called the twelve apostles to him, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases, sending them out, two and two, to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. But first he gave them their instructions; 'Do not go,' he said, 'into the walks of the Gentiles, or enter any city of Samaria; go rather to the lost sheep that belong to the house of Israel. And preach as you go, telling them, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils; give as you have received the gift, without payment. Take a staff for your journey and nothing more; no bread, no wallet, no gold or silver or copper to fill your purses; be shod with sandals, and do not wear a second coat; the labourer has a right to his maintenance. Whenever you enter a city or a village, find out who is worthy to be your host, and make your lodging there until you go away. When you enter this house, you are to wish it well; and so if the house is worthy, your good wishes shall come down upon it; if unworthy, let them come back to you the way they went. And wherever they



Joseph's brother (p. 414); his wife's name was Mary (p. 398); James and Joseph were their sons (p. 402). Simon and Jude were also cousins, probably on our Lady's side. Three of them were apostles (four if we count in Matthew as a son of Cleophas, p. 75).

### **From Capernaum March 29 A.D.**

It was our Lord's plan that all Israel should hear the message of salvation. At the moment he is concerned only with Galilee (for his preaching in Judea and Perea see chapters eight and nine), in which there were 204 towns and villages, according to Josephus. His time is short; so why not use his twelve, who have been with him now for nine months, to assist him? It will be good training for their work of converting the world. They set out in pairs (Peter and John together) with the same message as John the Baptist but with this difference: they have Jesus' own example, and his power to heal the sick and cast out devils.

Our Lord's instructions to his first missionaries demand forgetfulness of self, and total consecration to their new work (pp. 216, 218). Since it is his work, they must rely entirely on his Providence, not material resources; they must practise the voluntary poverty of the Son of God. This is vividly expressed in their mode of travel: they are to walk, not ride a donkey. A man who walks needs only a staff, a pair of sandals, and the clothes he stands up in; a second coat is only an encumbrance. They are God's beggars; no food, no money to buy food or lodging; no wallet to store up what they beg. The Lord will provide for them through the people they evangelize: "The Lord has bidden the heralds of the gospel live by preaching the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9, 14).

A public inn, even if they had money and food, is not the place to meet the citizens of the city; it is only for transients. They are not famous enough to be asked to speak in synagogues. The hospitality of a private house is the key both to their support and to contact with the inhabitants; there will usually be some well-disposed persons in every city. If not, they are to disown that place as though it were heathen territory. The symbolism of



will not receive you or listen to your words, as you leave that city or that house shake off the dust from your feet in witness against them; I promise you, it shall go less hard with the land of Sodom and Gomorrha at the day of judgment, than with that city. Remember, I am sending you out to be like sheep among wolves; you must be wary, then, as serpents, and yet innocent as doves.'

So they set out and passed through the villages, preaching the gospel, bidding men repent, and healing the sick wherever they went; they cast out many devils, and many who were sick they anointed with oil, and healed them.

### **John the Baptist Beheaded**

When Jesus had done giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he left the place where he was, to teach and preach in their cities. And Herod, who was prince in that quarter, heard of all his doings, and did not know what to think.

Some were saying, 'It is John the Baptist, risen from the dead, and that is why these powers are active in him.'

Others were saying, 'Elias has appeared.'

And others, 'It is a prophet like one of the old prophets.'

But when Herod heard what was told of Jesus, he declared, 'He has risen from the dead, John, whom I beheaded.' And he was eager to see him.

Herod himself had sent and arrested John and put him in prison, in chains, for love of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married; because John had told Herod, 'It is wrong for you to take your brother's wife.' Herodias gave him no rest, and would willingly have murdered him, but could not because Herod was afraid of John, recognizing him for an upright and holy man; he was afraid, too, of the people, who looked upon John as a prophet; so that he kept him carefully. He raised many questions about his teaching, and was glad to listen to him.



shaking off the dust from their feet was well known to the Jews; they always did this before entering Palestine from heathen lands, so as not to defile that sacred soil.

The use of oil by the apostles is not mentioned elsewhere in the gospels. This anointing was undoubtedly done at the explicit command of Jesus. The Council of Trent teaches that it was a prelude to the sacrament of Extreme Unction, later mentioned in the Epistle of St. James (5, 14). With the rite of baptizing, practised by the apostles in the Jordan (p. 50), it is the first indication of the sacramental system: ordinary natural elements, such as water and oil, are endowed with divine power by Jesus.

### **Machaerus March 29 A.D.**

It was probably early in March, when the cold of winter had passed, that Jesus sent his twelve on their mission throughout Galilee. It was a pleasant time of the year, when most of the country people would be resting before the harvest; the best time to find everyone at home. Capharnaum was the place where they received their marching orders. Jesus himself was not idle; he, too, with some of the other disciples, continued his teaching as before. A small but sorrowful group caught up with him one day; they were disciples of John the Baptist, bringing news of his death. He had been beheaded, at night, without warning, during a birthday celebration in the palace at Machaerus; they had buried the headless body there. (The vivid details of St. Mark's gospel were obtained later from someone present at the party, probably from either Chusa or Manahen, two members of Herod Antipas' household, pp. 62, 106; Manahen became a Christian, Acts 13, 1.)

Ten months before, John the Baptist had gone to Herod Antipas in his palace at Tiberias, and rebuked that Jewish prince for his scandalous life; in particular for his adulterous and incestuous union with Herodias (p. 56). Thereupon, Antipas had locked him up in the fortress of Machaerus; in this out of the way prison, he thought the crowds would soon forget him.

Machaerus had strategical importance at this time; it was on the Nabatean border; and Antipas was not on friendly terms with



And now came a fitting occasion, upon which Herod gave a birthday feast to his lords and officers, and to the chief men of Galilee. Herodias' own daughter came in and danced, and gave such pleasure to Herod and his guests that the king said to the girl, 'Ask me for whatever you will, and you shall have it'; he even bound himself by an oath, 'I will grant whatever request you make, though it were half of my kingdom.'

Thereupon she went out and said to her mother, 'What shall I ask for?'

And she answered, 'The head of John the Baptist.'

With that she hastened into the king's presence and made her request; 'My will is,' she said, 'that you should give me the head of John the Baptist; give it me now, on a dish.'

And the king was full of remorse, but out of respect to his oath and to those who sat with him at table, he would not disappoint her. So he sent one of his guard with orders that the head should be brought on a dish. This soldier cut off his head in the prison, and brought it on a dish, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

When John's disciples heard of it, they gained access to the body, which they took away and buried, and came to tell the news to Jesus.

### **Multiplication of the Five Loaves**

And now the apostles came together again in the presence of Jesus, and told him of all they had done, and all the teaching they had given. And he said to them, 'Come away into a quiet place by yourselves, and rest a little.' For there were many coming and going, and they scarcely had leisure to eat. So they took ship, and went across the sea of Galilee, or Tiberias, in the direction of a city called Bethsaida, to desert country where they could



them. Herodias was the cause of this. In 26 A.D. he had met her in Rome, and married her, even though her husband was still living, as well as his own wife, a daughter of Aretas, king of Nabatea. When his daughter came home, Aretas angrily threatened revenge. Consequently, Antipas spent a good deal of time, with his army officers, at Machaerus, expecting hostilities to commence any day. War did not actually begin till seven years later (36 A.D.), when Antipas was soundly defeated. The Jews looked on this as a divine punishment for the murder of John, says Josephus.

Intrigue and violence were part of the life of the half-pagan, dissolute Herodian house; they were always alien to the life of the Jewish people. At this time Antipas was over fifty; he had been ruling Galilee and Perea for thirty-two years. Herodias, who was his niece, was in her late thirties; she was a descendant of the Machabees. Salome was about fifteen.

At the end of March, a few weeks after John's murder, Antipas was back in Tiberias. All his court was talking of nothing but Jesus; the apostolic mission had roused public enthusiasm even in the remotest corners of Galilee. His uneasy conscience was alarmed by all this talk; he could not keep his mind from wandering back to that night at Machaerus. And to explain this fear of Antipas, St. Mark tells the story of the beheading as a flash-back. Antipas was not repentant; his superstitious fears only made him a more dangerous enemy. But our Lord had yet a year of preaching; Antipas would not 'see' him until Good Friday (p. 388).

#### **Plain of Bataiha April 29 A.D.**

In the early weeks of April, the twelve returned to Capernaum; there Jesus was waiting for them. They were in need of a holiday after their strenuous month's work. They would take Peter's boat and cross to the eastern shore of the lake, as they had done after the first preaching in parables (p. 122). But the enthusiastic crowd would not let them escape as easily as that. The boat was headed towards the north-east; they could keep it in sight, and walk along the shore as quickly as it could be rowed



be alone. But many saw them going, and recognized him; gathering from all the cities, they hurried to the place by land, and were there before them. So, when he disembarked, Jesus went up on to the hillside, and there sat down with his disciples. It was nearly the time of the Jews' great feast, the paschal feast. And now, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a great crowd had gathered round him, he took pity on them, since they were like sheep that have no shepherd; so he gave them welcome, and spoke to them for a long time of the kingdom of God, and cured those who were in need of healing.

And now the day began to wear on; and the twelve came and said to him, 'This is a lonely place, and it is past the accustomed hour; give them leave to go to the farms and villages round about so that they can find lodging and food; they have nothing to eat.'

But Jesus told them, 'There is no need for them to go away; it is for you to give them food to eat.'

Then he said to Philip, 'Where can we buy bread for these folk to eat?' In saying this, he was putting him to the test; he himself knew well enough what he meant to do.

Philip answered him, 'Two hundred silver pieces would not buy enough bread for them, even to give each a little.'

He asked, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.'

One of his disciples (it was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother) said to him, 'There is a boy here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what is that among so many?'

'Bring them to me here,' he said; 'make them all sit down in companies on the green grass.'

There was no lack of grass where they were; and they took their places in rows, by hundreds and fifties. And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave these to his disciples to set before them, and a share of the fishes



in the still air of this warm spring morning. It was only two miles to the Jordan, at the north end of the lake; another three miles across the plain of Bataiha, and they were at the foot of the hills on the eastern shore. By boat it would be about four miles, direct from Capharnaum. So, once again, the twelve missed their holiday.

This is probably the largest crowd ever addressed by our Lord. Pilgrim groups from northern Galilee, from the Decapolis, and from regions to the north of Palestine usually camped by the lake for a few days before the last lap of their journey down the Jordan valley and up to Jerusalem for the paschal feast. Patriotic feeling always ran high at this great national feast of liberation from the bondage of Egypt; the atmosphere among the crowd by the lake was like that of Palm Sunday.

It was probably before midday, when our Lord began his teaching from a hillock a few hundred yards from the lake. It was some seven hours later, when the sun was sinking behind the Galilean hills, that the question of food was brought to his attention by his apostles. The few provisions some had brought had been eaten long since. Philip was a native of Bethsaida, so he should know if there was a bakery anywhere in this region. Instead of answering Jesus, he makes a rapid calculation, based on the estimated number of people: 'Must be over 5,000 here—say a loaf each—barley bread (cheaper than wheat) is 24 loaves to a silver piece—24 times 200 gives 4,800. No need to ask Judas; we certainly haven't more than a few silver pieces in the purse.' Jewish loaves were more like slices of bread, or a large pikelet about nine inches across and an inch thick. The fish was from the lake, dried and salted. The Greek text of St. Mark 6, 41, indicates that the miracle took place in Jesus' hands: the apostles kept coming back to him to fill their baskets. He multiplied, they distributed (p. 164).

It was a formal banquet, not a picnic meal. The crowd was seated in orderly ranks, not standing. Jesus solemnly blessed and broke the food as master of the house; his disciples served it, and gathered up the scraps, as though the meal had taken place in a



too, as much as they had a mind for. Then, when they had all had enough, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the broken pieces that are left over, so that nothing be wasted.' And when they took up the broken pieces, and what was left of the fishes, they filled twelve baskets with them; about five thousand men had eaten, not reckoning women and children.

When they saw the miracle he had done, these men began to say, 'Beyond doubt, this is the prophet who is to come into the world.'

### **Jesus Walks on the Water**

Knowing, then, that they meant to come and carry him off, so as to make a king of him, Jesus prevailed upon his disciples to take ship and cross to the other side before him, leaving him to send the crowds home. And when he had taken leave of them, he went up by himself on to the hillside to pray there. Meanwhile his disciples went down to the lake, and there, embarking on the boat, they began to cross the water to Capharnaum, passing by Bethsaida. Darkness had fallen, and Jesus had not yet come back to them. Meanwhile there was a strong wind blowing, and the sea was beginning to grow rough. The boat was soon a long way from shore, hard put to it by the waves, for the wind was against them; while he was on the shore alone. But shortly before daybreak, seeing them hard put to it with rowing (they had rowed some three or four miles), he came to them, walking on the sea, and made as if to pass them by. When they saw him walking on the sea, the disciples were terrified; they said, 'It is an apparition,' and cried out for fear.

But all at once Jesus spoke to them, 'Take courage,' he said, 'it is myself; do not be afraid.'

And Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is yourself, bid me come to you over the water.'

He said, 'Come.'



dining room. It was a symbol of the life-giving food of the kingdom, the Blessed Eucharist, which he will give at the next Passover, on Holy Thursday; then he will change bread into his own body (p. 350). But the crowd was thinking along different lines. They saw only material food; prosperity and plenty instead of poverty and want. No such divine power had been seen in Israel since the Lord fed his people with manna in the desert. After all, was not abundance of material goods a sign of Messianic times, foretold by the prophets? Also, there would be no trouble to provision an army fighting the Messianic war of liberation from Rome; one loaf would be enough to feed a thousand men.

### Lake of Galilee April 29 A.D.

A few questions, an excited voice raised here and there, and a wave of excitement swept through the crowd. It was obvious to all; at last Jesus had openly and publicly given them an unmistakable Messianic sign. They had only to proclaim him king, and march with him to Jerusalem. Down with the tyrant Rome! Down with Herod, the murderer of John! So the crisis had come for the crowd. After a year's instruction, their outlook had not changed at all. Jesus' first thought was to protect his chosen twelve from this wild enthusiasm. With reluctance they obeyed his order to proceed to the boat, and put out to sea. Jesus knew how fickle the crowd was; most of the excitement would have worked itself out by morning. It was useless to reason with them now; so, as soon as the twelve embarked, he disappeared in the growing darkness, back up the mountain side alone.

The apostles did not go direct to Capharnaum; instead they rowed along the coast in the direction of Bethsaida. The last hurried instructions of the Master had been to wait for him offshore; he would come to them as soon as he could disperse the crowd; it would be easy to pick out their boat in the light of the paschal moon. But the crowd did not give up easily; they patrolled the shore, knowing that Jesus was still somewhere nearby; some of them even camped for the night. The twelve waited on, expecting Jesus to appear on the shore at any moment. Without warning, as one night, four months before (p. 122), the



And Peter let himself down out of the boat and walked over the water to reach Jesus. Then, seeing how strong the wind was, he lost courage and began to sink; whereupon he cried aloud, 'Lord, save me.'

And Jesus at once stretched out his hand and caught hold of him, saying to him, 'Why did you hesitate, man of little faith?'

So they went on board the boat, and thereupon the wind dropped. And the boat's crew came and said, falling at his feet, 'You are indeed the Son of God.' They were astonished out of all measure; they had not grasped the lesson of the loaves, so dulled were their hearts. And all at once their boat reached the land they were making for.

### **Summary of a Later Mission**

When they had crossed, they came to shore at Genesareth and moored there. As soon as they had disembarked, he was recognized, and they ran off into all the country round and began bringing the sick after him, beds and all, wherever they heard he was. And wherever he entered villages, or farmsteads, or towns, they used to lay the sick down in the open streets, and beg him to let them touch even the hem of his cloak; and all those who touched him recovered.

### **Discourse on the Bread of Life**

Next morning, the crowd was still waiting on the opposite shore. They had seen that there was only one boat there, and that Jesus did not embark with his disciples on this boat, but left his disciples to go back alone. But now, since other boats from Tiberias had put in near the place where they ate the loaves when the Lord gave thanks over them, the crowd, finding neither Jesus nor his disciples there, embarked on these boats in their turn, and went back to Capharnaum to look for Jesus. And when they



wind roared down the Jordan gorge from the north. It was useless to wait any longer; so they turned south and went with the wind towards Capharnaum. The wind was from the north-west, and, despite all their efforts at the oars, they were driven from the western shore out into the middle of the lake, and south of Capharnaum. Some time after three, Jesus, moved with pity at their exhaustion, came to them. There are usually no clouds with these storms on the lake; he could see the boat with his natural human sight, in the light of the setting moon. The twelve did not yet fully comprehend that Jesus was God; yet that should have been their conclusion from the miracle of the loaves. Their minds were slow to see. The walking on the water, the sudden dropping of the wind, were leading them a step further in their understanding.

#### **Plain of Genesareth April-May 29 A.D.**

The plain of Genesareth extends from Tabgha to Magdala. Here, some four miles south of Capharnaum, they came ashore. While they were eating their breakfast (they still had their twelve baskets of bread and fish left over from the miracle), some fishermen gathered round. However, since our Lord was back in Capharnaum that same day, this paragraph can only be a summary of his work in this region of Galilee, after his return from the paschal feast in Jerusalem (p. 152). He spent most of the month of May here, before his return to Capharnaum (p. 158).

#### **Capharnaum April 29 A.D.**

By morning the people had dispersed, except for a few dozen of the more determined zealots. St. John still calls them 'the crowd,' because they represented its false Messianic ideas. Some fishermen, who had been forced ashore by the storm during the night and were now on their way to the Jordan inlet to fish, assured them that there was no other boat on any of the beaches further south. Jesus and the twelve must then be back on the western shore. They won the fishermen over to the cause and returned to Capharnaum; they probably met our Lord, late in the



found that he had crossed the lake, they asked him. 'Master, when did you make your way here?'

Jesus answered them, 'Believe me, if you are looking for me now, it is not because of the miracles you have seen; it is because you were fed with the loaves, and had your fill. You should not work to earn food which perishes in the using. Work to earn food which affords, continually, eternal life, such food as the Son of Man will give you; God, the Father, has authorized him.'

'What shall we do, then,' they asked him, 'so as to work in God's service?'

Jesus answered them, 'This is the service God asks of you, to believe in the Man whom he has sent.'

### **Manna from Heaven**

So they said to him, 'Why then, what miracle can you do? We must see it before we trust you; what can you effect? Our fathers had manna to eat in the desert; as the scripture says, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat."'

Jesus said to them, 'Believe me when I tell you this; the bread that comes from heaven is not what Moses gave you. The real bread from heaven is given only by my Father. God's gift of bread comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'

'Then, Lord,' they said, 'give us this bread all the while.'

But Jesus told them, 'It is I who am the bread of life; he who comes to me will never be hungry, he who has faith in me will never know thirst. (But you, as I told you, though you have seen me, do not believe in me.) All that the Father has entrusted to me will come to me, and him who comes to me I will never cast out. It is the will of him who sent me, not my own will, that I have come down from heaven to do; and he who sent me would have me keep without loss, and raise up at the last day, all he has entrusted to me. Yes, this is the will of him who



afternoon, walking into Capharnaum from the south.

Then begins a conversation which develops more fully in the regular synagogue meeting next day (p. 148). As in the talk with the Samaritan woman a year before (p. 56), our Lord starts with what interests them most—the miracle of the loaves. Despite questions and interruptions, he continues, leading step by step to the climax: his own body to be eaten as food in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The theme of his talk is bread (the word occurs 14 times). Bread is basic food; it is the staff of life. Our Lord combines these two ideas, and concentrates them in his own Person: he is life-giving food, bread from heaven, the life of the soul. The key that unlocks this treasure for men is faith, not Jewish blood; belief in the divinity of Jesus gives eternal life.

### **Synagogue at Capharnaum April 29 A.D.**

Manna was the food that God sent down each night into the camp of Israel, during the forty years of the Exodus. It was white and powdered fine like hoar-frost; it tasted like flour mixed with honey. Jesus had led the crowd out across the sea, and given them food miraculously, just as Moses had. That is why the thought of manna is running through their minds. (It is of interest to note, too, that a pot of manna is one of the decorations still to be seen in the ruins of the synagogue at Capharnaum.) If Jesus was the Messiah, would he not repeat this miracle again and again? Abundance of food and material prosperity were two of the promised signs of Messianic times.

The Jews were comparing the loaves with the manna, and Jesus with Moses. A better way is to compare Jesus with the manna: both are bread, and both came down from heaven. In this paragraph, our Lord takes up the idea of food ('bread'), and shows the superiority of the spiritual (his teaching) over the material (manna). In the next paragraph, he will treat more fully the meaning of 'came down from heaven.' A man gets hungry again after eating material food; that is why manna had to be given day after day; it had only a temporary effect. But our Lord's influence on men's souls is spiritual; it does not need to be



sent me, that all those who believe in the Son when they see him should enjoy eternal life; I am to raise them up at the last day.'

### **Jesus Has Come Down from Heaven**

The Jews were by now complaining of his saying, 'I am myself the bread which has come down from heaven.'

'Is not this Jesus,' they said, 'the son of Joseph, whose father and mother are well known to us? What does he mean by saying, "I have come down from heaven"?''

Jesus answered them, 'Do not whisper thus to one another. Nobody can come to me without being attracted towards me by the Father who sent me, so that I can raise him up at the last day. It is written in the book of the prophets, "And they shall all have the Lord for their teacher"; everyone who listens to the Father and learns, comes to me. (Not that anyone has seen the Father, except him who comes from God; he alone has seen the Father.) Believe me when I tell you this; the man who has faith enjoys eternal life. <sup>48</sup> It is I who am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your fathers, who ate manna in the desert, died none the less; <sup>50</sup> the bread which comes down from heaven is such that he who eats of it never dies. <sup>51</sup> I myself am the living bread that has come down from heaven. <sup>52</sup> If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live for ever. And now, what is this bread which I am to give? It is my flesh, given for the life of the world.'

### **The Blessed Eucharist Promised**

<sup>53</sup> Then the Jews fell to disputing with one another, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

<sup>54</sup> Whereupon Jesus said to them, 'Believe me when I tell you this; you can have no life in yourselves, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. <sup>55</sup> The man who eats my flesh and drinks my blood enjoys eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>56</sup> My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. <sup>57</sup> He who eats



repeated again and again like material food; it satisfies once and for all. It is the only real food, because it gives eternal life. Faith in God's Son gives the believer immunity even from the power of death.

There is no change in audience, only a change in their attitude. St. John uses the phrase 'the Jews' to describe their growing hostility; it corresponds to what the other evangelists call 'the Pharisees.' They saw clearly that the real difficulty lay in Jesus' claim to divine origin, not in his use of the word 'bread.' He had not come from the clouds; he had been born of Joseph and Mary (see p. 196). They stumbled and stopped at the hurdle, because they did not have faith. Our Lord tells them plainly why: their minds were not open, nor their wills docile to receive light from God; faith is God's gift only to those who are disposed to receive it. That is why they did not see that Jesus could be divine as well as human, the Second Person of the Trinity, incarnate.

Up till the last few sentences of this paragraph, Jesus has been using 'bread' in the sense of spiritual food to be assimilated by faith (in contrast to manna, a material food). Now (v. 49) he introduces a new idea—eating. He is bread to be eaten physically, like manna (he now compares himself to manna, no longer contrasts himself with it). In v. 51 he calls himself 'living bread,' for the first time. In v. 52 a third new idea is introduced—'flesh.' This (really beginning with v. 48) is the first mention of the Blessed Eucharist. It is a promise for the future; it will be realized in a year's time, at the Last Supper (p. 350).

The Jews commonly pictured the Messianic kingdom as a banquet; they would eat and drink to their hearts' content. But they never dreamt that the food they would eat was to be the flesh and blood of the Messiah himself. These words of our Lord dumbfounded them. So, in order to exclude any metaphorical interpretation, he insists that it is real eating that he means. Four times (verses 55, 57, 58, 59) he uses a special verb, which can only mean physical eating; it means to chew or munch. Added to the phrase 'drink blood,' it sounded like cannibalism to his audience.



my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him. <sup>58</sup> As I live because of the Father, the living Father who has sent me, so he who eats me will live, in his turn, because of me. <sup>59</sup> Such is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not as it was with your fathers, who ate manna and died none the less; the man who eats this bread will live eternally.'

### **Many Disciples Desert Jesus**

He said all this while he was teaching in the synagogue, at Capharnaum. And there were many of his disciples who said, when they heard it, 'This is strange talk, who can be expected to listen to it?'

But Jesus, inwardly aware that his disciples were complaining over it, said to them, 'Does this try your faith? What will you make of it, if you see the Son of Man ascending to the place where he was before? Only the spirit gives life; the flesh is of no avail; and the words I have been speaking to you are spirit, and life. But there are some, even among you, who do not believe.' Jesus knew from the first which were those who did not believe, and which of them was to betray him. And he went on to say, 'That is what I meant when I told you that nobody can come to me unless he has received the gift from my Father.'

After this, many of his disciples went back to their old ways, and walked no more in his company. Whereupon Jesus said to the twelve, 'Would you, too, go away?'

Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom should we go? Your words are the words of eternal life; we have learned to believe, and are assured that you are the Holy One of God.'

Jesus answered them, 'Have I not chosen all twelve of you? And one of you is a devil.' He was speaking of Judas son of Simon, the Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, and was to betray him.



But the key to understanding is the word 'life.' It is repeated seven times in six sentences. They are to eat 'living bread,' not an inanimate substance such as manna. The body of Christ has life-giving power, because he is divine; the life of the Son is the life of the Father. The Christian is eternally enriched when he communicates, being united through Christ with divine life.

Jesus began his teaching by the lakeside in this synagogue, almost a year before (p. 64). Nazareth had already rejected him; it was now the turn of 'his own city' of adoption to do the same. There was no need to speak of the final reaction of the audience, when even his own followers deserted him.

This conversation takes place when Jesus is alone with his disciples. First of all he appeals to his Ascension, just as he will at the Last Supper (pp. 354-366). When they see him going back to heaven surely they will then realize that he came from there in the first place; that he is God as well as Man. The two words 'spirit' and 'flesh' are used in a meaning found frequently in St. Paul (e.g., I Cor. 3, 1-3): 'spirit' is the supernatural outlook of faith, 'flesh' is natural reason alone (note that it is the flesh, not my flesh). If they have the supernatural light of faith ('spirit'), then they will understand. Peter, speaking for the twelve, possesses it, though he does not fully profess faith in our Lord's divinity—not yet. He acknowledges that Jesus is sent from God, and shares in his holiness; four months later, he will confess that Jesus is the Lord God himself (p. 168).

In contrast to Peter is Judas, the first and last in the list of the twelve. He is mentioned seven times in the gospels; the last five when he is engaged in betraying Jesus. Since he was chosen by our Lord, he could hardly have been evil from the beginning. This, then, is the occasion when he falls away from the Master, and goes over to the enemy camp, to Satan. He will become hard and cold; he will steal from the common purse. Jesus knows, but will not cast him out; he will keep trying to win him back, even as Judas is betraying him in the garden of Gethsemani (p. 376).



## Chapter 7: Peter's Act of Faith



FOR most of this chapter, our Lord is outside Galilee to the north. Where he went does not matter, but *why* he went and *what* happened there is of great importance. He went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, the territory of Philip, and the Decapolis, where a small minority of the population were Jews; he brought the good news of salvation to these exiles, as he had done to the Galileans, and will later to the Judeans and Pereans. But the real reason why he left Galilee was to keep away from the crowds there; they had failed him (chapter 6); he could now concentrate on the final formation of his twelve apostles. All along, they had been his primary concern. Away from the hostility of the Pharisees, and the distraction of the crowds, in intimate daily contact with him, they now enter the last stage of their new career.

And what *did* happen on this northern journey? For the first time since their association with Jesus by the Jordan, eighteen months before, they realized that he was not only the Messiah, but the Lord God himself. This momentous event happened along the road to Caesarea Philippi; Peter was the one who made this act of faith, for the twelve. This was the fitting climax to the Galilean ministry; our Lord's patient training had at last borne fruit. His first task (founding his Church) had been accomplished.

A sudden change now comes over the gospel story. Up till this our Lord has made only passing and hidden allusions to his own death; the gradual revelation of his divine nature to the twelve has occupied all his thoughts. Now that they believe, and his kingdom is solidly founded, the thought of his passion and death floods in upon him. At the moment when his disciples confess his divinity, he is most aware of his humanity. From now on his gaze is on Jerusalem; it is there he is to die.

Chapter 7 is important in the structure of the gospel plan; it is like the saddle of a mountain range. It is a long, stiff climb up to the profession of faith in his divinity, and the founding of the true kingdom; then down to Jerusalem for the end of his journey, his redemptive death on the cross.



### The Cripple at the Pool

After this came a Jewish feast, for which Jesus went up to Jerusalem. There is a pool in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate, called in Hebrew Bezatha, with five porches, under which a great number of diseased folk used to lie, the blind, the lame, the disabled, waiting for a disturbance of the water. There was one man there who had been disabled thirty-eight years. Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had waited a long time; 'Have you a mind,' he asked, 'to recover your strength?'

'Sir,' said the cripple, 'I have no one to let me down into the pool when the water is stirred; and while I am on my way, somebody else steps down before me.'

Jesus said to him, 'Rise up, take up your bed, and walk.' And all at once the man recovered his strength, and took up his bed, and walked.

That day, it was the sabbath; and the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.'

He answered them, 'The man who gave me back my strength told me himself, "Take up your bed, and walk."'

So they asked him, 'Who is this man who told you, "Take up your bed and walk"?''

The cripple who had been healed did not know who it was; Jesus had drawn aside from so crowded a place. But afterwards when Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'Behold, you have recovered your strength; do not sin any more, for fear that worse should befall you,' the man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had restored his strength.

### An Interrogation by the Jewish Leaders

The Jews took occasion to rouse ill-will against Jesus for doing such things on the sabbath. And Jesus answered them, 'My Father has never ceased working, and I too



**Jerusalem Paschal Feast 29 A.D.**

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish in Galilee took place shortly before the paschal feast; it would seem most natural to take the feast here mentioned as that particular Passover which began on Monday, April 18. It is hardly likely that our Lord would remain away from Jerusalem for such an important festival; attendance was obligatory on all male Jews over twelve years, and Jesus carried out all the duties laid down by the Mosaic law. It is just a year, the previous paschal feast, since he was in Jerusalem (p. 46); on that occasion he drove the buyers and sellers from the temple.

I have omitted a whole sentence after the word 'water.' It reads: 'From time to time, an angel of the Lord came down upon the pool, and the water was stirred up; and the first man who stepped into the pool, after the stirring of the water, recovered from whatever infirmity it was that oppressed him.' It is absent from the best MSS, and is probably an addition to the gospel, by a non-inspired hand. It was intended to explain the cripple's strange statement of his slowness in the race to be first into the 'stirred' water. Possibly the pool would hold only one person; the intermittent gushing of the spring was attributed to an angel.

This man had been a cripple for six years when our Lord was born, though not necessarily waiting here for thirty-eight years. His long-suffering and faith were evident to Jesus, who also had another motive for curing him: the instruction of the Jewish leaders. Unsolicited, and without any urgency, he deliberately worked this miracle on the sabbath. This law had been the cause of his greatest opposition, a year before, in Galilee (p. 78); the Jews were fanatical sabbath observers. 'Carrying burdens' was one of the thirty-nine prohibited works; it was grave matter to carry even a dried fig.

There were no crowds; this was not a public discussion, but a private interrogation by the officials of the Sanhedrin, the supreme Council. The delegation waited on Jesus and his apostles,



must be at work.' This made the Jews more determined than ever to make away with him, that he not only broke the sabbath, but spoke of God as his own Father, thereby treating himself as equal to God.

And Jesus answered them thus: 'Believe me when I tell you this, the Son cannot do anything at his own pleasure, he can only do what he sees his Father doing; what the Father does is what the Son does in his turn. The Father loves the Son, and discloses to him all that he himself does. And he has greater things yet to disclose to him, for your astonishment; just as the Father bids the dead rise up and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whomsoever he will. So it is with judgment; the Father, instead of passing judgment on any man himself, has left all judgment to the Son, so that all may reverence the Son just as they reverence the Father; to deny reverence to the Son is to deny reverence to the Father who has sent him.

### **The Son as Life-Giver and Judge**

'Believe me when I tell you this, the man who listens to my words, and puts his trust in him who sent me, enjoys eternal life; he does not meet with rejection, he has passed over already from death to life. Believe me, the time is coming, nay, has already come, when the dead will listen to the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen to it will live. As the Father has within him the gift of life, so he has granted to the Son that he too should have within him the gift of life, and has also granted him power to execute judgment, since he is the Son of Man. Do not be surprised at that; the time is coming, when all those who are in their graves will hear his voice, and will come out of them; those whose actions have been good, rising to new life, and those whose doings have been evil, rising to meet their sentence. I cannot do anything on my own



during one of their visits to the temple; there they administered a severe rebuke to him for his sabbath violation. These were the learned men of Israel, so Jesus spoke to them in learned fashion of deep theological matters.

Sabbath is the Hebrew word for rest; the origin of the third commandment was God's 'resting' on the seventh day (Genesis 2, 2). Jewish theologians knew, of course, that this was only a metaphor; God's continued activity is needed to keep his creation from dissolving back into nothingness. They saw in our Lord's words a claim to equality with Yahweh. This to them was blasphemy (the charge on which he was finally condemned, p. 384). But it is not yet the time for Jesus to make a solemn declaration of his divinity; their monotheism would not permit them to accept that, until they were aware of the distinction of Persons in God. Their minds must be prepared gradually to meet such a revelation. So our Lord speaks here of himself as Man, but with special powers which God alone possesses. The dominant thought is the intimate relationship between Father and Son.

Our Lord develops his argument on the two words, 'life' and 'judgment.' They are two of the many powers proper to God. The selection of these two is due to the circumstances: 'life' is suggested by the cure of the cripple; new vitality given to dead limbs. 'Judgment' is a topical thought; these men have already unjustly judged Jesus, without considering the evidence. Would they not think more deeply, if they knew that he will be their judge when the last judgment takes place? To accept or reject the Son, is to accept or reject eternal life. To give life to men is the primary purpose of the coming of the Son; this is life for the soul, the divine life of the Father and Son, not merely physical life of the body. These two 'works' or activities of God are possessed equally by Father and Son; they affect men, not through the Father (no man has ever seen him), but through him who is both Son of God and Son of Man.



authority; I decide as I am bidden to decide, and my decision is never unjust, because I am consulting the will of him who sent me, not my own.

### Jesus Appeals to Four Witnesses

‘If I testify in my own behalf, that testimony of mine is worth nothing; there is another who testifies to me, and I know well that the testimony he bears me is worthy of trust. You yourselves sent a message to John, and he testified to the truth. (Not that I depend on human testimony; it is for your own welfare that I say this.) He, after all, was the lamp lit to show you the way, and there was a time when you were willing enough to sun yourselves in his light. But the testimony I have is greater than John’s; the actions which my Father has enabled me to achieve, those very actions which I perform, bear me witness that it is the Father who has sent me. Nay, the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. You have always been deaf to his voice, blind to the vision of him, and his word is not continually present in your hearts; that is why you will not trust one whom he has sent. You pore over the scriptures, thinking to find eternal life in them (and indeed, it is of these I speak as bearing witness to me); but you will not come to me, to find life. I do not mean that I look for honour from men, but that I can see you have no love of God in your hearts.

‘I have come in my Father’s name, and you give me no welcome, although you will welcome some other, if he comes in his own name. How should you learn to believe, you who are content to receive honour from one another, and are not ambitious for the honour which comes from him, who alone is God? Do not suppose that it will be for me to accuse you before my Father; your accusation will come from Moses, the very man in whom you put your trust. If you believed Moses, you would believe me;



Our Lord uses the third person when speaking of himself in this part of his talk, to avoid the shock to their imagination of this man here before them claiming to be the Almighty.

Our Lord wants them to think, and weigh carefully the evidence for his claims. Faith in him will bring life; and faith is a reasonable submission to one who is trustworthy. He now presents the evidence. (In Jewish legal procedure, a person's own testimony in his own case was not accepted.) Our Lord brings four witnesses to testify for him. (1) John the Baptist, who had pointed out Jesus to all Israel, down by the Jordan. Now that he had died in defence of the law, his prestige with the Jewish leaders had risen. (2) The miracles of healing, and driving out of demons, that were daily occurrences in Galilee, for the past year. Our Lord here formally claims divine authority. How could God give his power to an impostor? (3) The scriptures are the forty-five books of the Old Testament. They are the revelation of God to his chosen people, messages from a loving Father to his children, from Adam to John the Baptist. There is one central thought running through them: the Son in whom all Israel's hopes are to be realized (pp. 416, 426). The Jews have failed to recognize Jesus, through lack of sanctity not lack of study. Their blindness goes back to their refusal to accept God's word; rebellion against God has been a national characteristic (Acts 7). It is because they have rejected the Father first, that they now reject the Son.

The first and worst of the seven deadly sins is pride; it puts self in the place of God. It was the characteristic vice of the Pharisees (pp. 94-96, 320), and the main cause of their rejection of Christ. They even studied the scriptures to gain a reputation for learning, not in search of truth. The first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch) were their special study; since Moses was the author of these books, our Lord introduces him as an important witness (No. 4) to whom the Jews were appealing in this case of sabbath violation. The mention of Moses was also par-



it was of me that he wrote. But if you give no credence to his writings, how should you give credence to my words?’

### **An Argument About Handwashing**

After this, Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews had designs on his life. Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes, who had come from Jerusalem, gathered round him; and these found fault, because they saw that some of his disciples sat down to eat with their hands defiled, that is, unwashed. For the Pharisees, and indeed all the Jews, holding to the tradition of their ancestors, never eat without carefully washing their hands; they will not sit down to meat, coming from the market, without thorough cleansing; and there are many other customs which they hold to by tradition, purifying of cups and pitchers and pans.

So the Pharisees and scribes asked him, ‘Why is it that your disciples violate the traditions of our ancestors? They do not wash their hands when they eat.’

He answered them, ‘Why is it that you yourselves violate the commandment of God with your traditions? You have quite defeated God’s commandment, to establish your own tradition instead. God has said, “Honour your father and your mother”; and again, “He who curses his father or mother dies without hope of reprieve.” But you say, “If a man says to his father or his mother, ‘All the money out of which you might get help from me is now Corban’ (that is, an offering to God), then father or mother can get no service from him.” With this and many like observances, you are making God’s law ineffectual through the traditions you have handed down. You hypocrites, it was a true prophecy Isaias made of you, when he said, “This people does me honour with its lips, but its heart is far from me; their worship of me is vain, for the doctrines they teach are the commandments of men.”’



ticularly apt at this feast of Passover; it commemorated the Exodus of Israel from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

### Capharnaum June 29 A.D.

This is the third of ten 'designs on his life' before Jesus is finally put to death; two in Galilee (pp. 80, 130), one in Perea (p. 250), and seven in Jerusalem. The people in Galilee were friendly, and it was remote from enemy headquarters at Jerusalem.

It was probably at a meal in the house of a friendly Pharisee, at Capharnaum, that the hand-washing regulation was raised by the spies from Jerusalem. The symbolism of water is obvious to all (as in Baptism). The Mosaic law prescribed many ritual washings for those who had incurred legal defilement; but it made no mention of washing before meals. This was a Pharisaic invention; it was man-made, yet regarded as more important than the law itself. A rabbinic maxim says: 'He who eats bread without washing his hands, is as one who frequents a harlot.' This hand-washing regulation was only a sample of the burdensome and minute prescriptions added to and falsifying the law of God. (The thirty-nine forbidden works on the sabbath was another.)

Just how disastrous this rabbinic casuistry was to the religious life of the Jews is shown by our Lord's illustration from 'Corban.' It is concerned with their interpretation of vows (he will explain the hand-washing later, p. 160). God's law said that anything once vowed to God could not be used for any other purpose (Leviticus 27). But the Pharisees allowed a son, bound by the fourth commandment to help his needy parents, to escape his obligation by vowing his money to God. This he did simply by saying 'Corban.' It was only a fictitious consecration, as he could use it for himself, but not give it to anybody else. Even if he repented later, nothing could be done about it; even an immoral vow was irrevocable, according to the rabbis. How could the love of God survive in a nation which encouraged such hardness of heart and flagrant violation of fundamental principles of morality? And that under pretext of reverence for God and his laws.



Then he gathered the people about him, and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and grasp what it means. It is not what goes into a man's mouth that makes him unclean; what makes a man unclean is what comes out of his mouth. Listen, you that have ears to hear with.'

When he had gone into the house, away from the crowd, his disciples came and said to him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees, when they heard your saying, were shocked?'

He answered, 'There is no plant which my heavenly Father has not planted but will be rooted up. Let them say what they will; they are blind men leading the blind, and when one blind man leads another, they will fall into the ditch together.'

Peter answered him, 'Explain this parable to us.'

'What,' he said, 'are you still so slow of wit? Do you not observe that any uncleanness which finds its way into a man's mouth has no means of defiling him, because it travels, not into his heart, but into the belly, and so is cast into the sewer' (thus he declared all meat to be clean); 'whereas all that comes out of his mouth comes from the heart, and it is that which makes a man unclean? It is from the heart that his wicked designs come, his sins of adultery, fornication, murder, theft, perjury, covetousness, malice, deceit, lasciviousness, envy, blasphemy, pride and folly. All these evils come from within, and it is these which make a man unclean; he is not made unclean by eating without washing his hands.'

### **A Persistent Syrophenician Woman**

After this, Jesus left those parts, and withdrew into the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon. He did not wish anyone to know of it; but he could not go unrecognized; for as soon as a woman, who came from that country, came to hear of him, she came up and cried aloud, 'Have pity



Our Lord had broken off his instruction to the crowd to have this meal; they were still waiting when he came out of the house. He proposed an enigmatic saying to them, suggested by the recent dispute with the Pharisees. Like his parables, it will make them think; the well-disposed will profit from it. The underlying principle is the same as the Sermon on the Mount: holiness is in the soul; it is internal not external acts that matter.

When they are back in their regular dwelling, Jesus has more to say to his apostles. Both the Pharisees and the crowd are blind; they have shut their eyes to the truth. The teachers of Israel have failed in their duty of guiding their people (pp. 320-324). The apostles must not be distressed at this; they are to replace these leaders, as the teachers of the whole world. It is to their formation that Jesus will now give all his time.

Our Lord now takes his apostles into more fundamental issues: the question of the kosher regulations (Leviticus 11). Certain foods, notably pork, were forbidden as 'unclean' (non-kosher). The purpose of this law was to keep the Israelites apart from the contamination of the heathen; they were to be a holy people (Lev. 11, 44). This was a positive law, and only temporary; once the Gentiles were admitted to the kingdom, its value was gone. That is what the phrase in brackets in the text refers to; its importance was not realized by the apostles till later (Acts 10).

The avoidance of ritual defilement had become a fetish with the Jews; their whole life was so taken up with avoiding defilement that they neglected to practise virtue. They so concentrated on the body that they forgot the soul.

### **Near Tyre and Sidon June 29 A.D.**

Our Lord did not stay long at Capharnaum; he will return there only once more (p. 178). He has finished with the people by the lakeside. The purpose of this journey to the north was to avoid the Galilean crowds, the Pharisees, and Herod Antipas; but mainly to have his apostles to himself. It was a kind of retreat in



on me, Lord, son of David. My daughter is cruelly troubled by an evil spirit.'

This woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by race. He gave her no word in answer; but his disciples came to him and pleaded with him; 'Rid us of her,' they said, 'she is following us with her cries.'

And he answered, 'My errand is only to the lost sheep that are of the house of Israel.'

Then he went into a house, but the woman came in and said, falling at his feet, 'Lord, help me.'

But he said to her, 'Let the children have their fill first; it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'

She answered him, 'Ah, yes, Lord; the dogs eat of the crumbs the children leave, underneath the table.'

And at that Jesus answered her, 'Woman, for this great faith of yours, let your will be granted. Back home with you; the devil has left your daughter.'

And when she came back to her house, she found her daughter lying on the bed, and the devil gone.

### **Jesus Heals a Deaf and Dumb Man**

Then he set out again from the region of Tyre, and came by way of Sidon to the sea of Galilee, right into the region of Decapolis, and went up on to the mountain side and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the deaf, the crippled, and many besides, whom they laid at his feet; and he healed them.

And they brought to him a man who was deaf and dumb, with the prayer that he would lay his hand upon him. And he took him aside out of the crowd; he put his fingers into his ears, and spat, and touched his tongue; then he looked up to heaven, and sighed; 'Ephpheta,' he said, (that is, 'Be opened'). Whereupon his ears were opened, and the bond which tied his tongue was loosed, and he talked plainly.



preparation for their act of faith in his divinity.

The coastal area about Tyre and Sidon was mostly pagan. This is the first time since his flight into Egypt that Jesus has been outside the limits of the Promised Land. His fame had already reached these parts (the gospels refer to people from this region among the early crowds by the lake, p. 80). The woman who annoyed the apostles by her persistence is known as Justa, and her daughter as Bernice, in an early legend. She is the second Gentile in the public ministry (the other is the centurion, a year earlier, p. 98). Both of them are outstanding for their lively faith; a quality which St. Paul emphasizes when comparing Jews and Gentiles.

Jesus ignores her in the street, almost in the grand manner of a rabbi; but while he and his disciples are seated at table, in the house of a friendly Jew, she bursts in on them. Jesus here refuses her request: his favours are restricted now to Jews ('children'); the Gentiles ('dogs') must wait until their time comes. The woman takes up the reference to dogs, and wittily argues: household pets do not have to wait; they can eat the scraps at the same time as the family is at table. Though they hold a lowly place, they belong nevertheless to the same household as the children.

### **East of the Lake July 29 A.D.**

Our Lord and his apostles kept on the march, avoiding crowds: these were important days for the twelve. They went north towards Sidon, then south-east down the Jordan, probably crossing it at the bridge of Jacob's Daughters, about ten miles north of the lake. The region of Decapolis was the high plateau, east of the lake. It was a federation of ten cities, small islands of Greek colonists in a Jewish world. There were numbers of Jews even in this region (as in the incident of the demoniac of Gerasa, pp. 122-124); they comprised the bulk of the crowds round Jesus.

Only one miracle of healing is recorded; and that probably because of our Lord's unusual method. His strange procedure (still retained in the sacrament of Baptism) may have been intended to stir up the faith of the man; eloquent gestures which a deaf man could understand. It demonstrated to the apostles that Jesus'



And he laid a strict charge on them, not to speak of it to anyone; but the more he charged them, the more widely they published it, and were more than ever astonished; 'He has done well,' they said, 'in all his doings; he has made the deaf hear, and the dumb speak.' And they praised the God of Israel for it.

### **Jesus Feeds Four Thousand Men**

Once more, at this time, the crowd had grown in numbers, and had nothing to eat. And he called his disciples to him, and said to them, 'I am moved with pity for the people; it is three days now since they have been in attendance on me, and they have nothing to eat. If I send them back to their homes fasting, they will grow faint on their journey; some of them have come from far off.'

His disciples answered him, 'How could anyone find bread to feed such a crowd, here in the desert?'

And he asked them, 'How many loaves have you?'

'Seven,' they said.

And he gave word to the people to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves, and when he had blessed and broken he gave these to his disciples to set before them; so they set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes; these he blessed, and ordered that these, too, should be set before them; and they ate, and had enough. When they had picked up what was left of the broken pieces, it filled seven hampers; four thousand men had eaten, not reckoning women and children. And so he sent them home.

### **No Sign Shall be Given this Generation**

Thereupon he embarked, with his disciples, and crossed to the region of Magdala. Here the Pharisees and Sadducees came out and entered upon a dispute with him; to put him to the test, they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.



sacred humanity contained the remedy for all ills. The crowd was kept away from the performance of the miracle; they might have taken our Lord's actions as some sort of magic.

A special word is used here for 'dumb'; it means rather an impediment of speech, probably so bad as to be the same as dumbness; he gets his name, Balbus (the stammerer), from this word.

### **Plain of Bataiha July 29 A.D.**

The Jews living in the Decapolis region east of the lake had heard something of Jesus from the demoniac cured by him seven months earlier. Our Lord spent some time instructing the crowds that now gathered about him; they were 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' Jews living outside Palestine.

More than 4,000 of them followed him down to the edge of the lake, loath to let him go. The site of this second multiplication is the same as the first, the eastern end of the plain of Bataiha (p. 139); but they are different in almost every other detail. The first time the crowds came from the western shore; this time they are from the east. There is not the same Messianic enthusiasm; these have not the same political aspirations as the Galileans. This time the apostles speak rather of the embarrassment than the impossibility of the situation; their faith has increased since the first multiplication. The Greek text of Mark 8, 6, just as 6, 41, again indicates that Jesus multiplied, and the apostles distributed. The fish this time are fresh from the lake, not dried and salted. The fragments are gathered in hampers, not small fishing baskets. A hamper is large (St. Paul escaped in one); two men would be needed to carry each one, hence only seven not twelve. Since the apostles have no food in the boat next day, these hampers were probably borrowed from the crowd, and returned again to their owners.

### **Magdala July 29 A.D.**

About a month had passed since they left the lake for their northern journey; yet the apostles had no trouble finding a boat. Where did they get it? Possibly it was Peter's own boat, lying idle at the pier in Bethsaida (his home port, p. 42); some of them could have brought it round after the miracle.



But he answered them, 'When evening comes, you say, "It is fair weather, the sky is red"; or at sunrise, "There will be a storm today, the sky is red and lowering." You know, then, how to read the face of heaven; can you not read the signs of appointed times?'

And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? It is a wicked and unfaithful generation that asks for a sign; believe me, this generation shall have no sign given it.'

And so he left them, and took ship again, and crossed to the further side.

### **A Conversation in a Boat**

They had forgotten to take bread with them, and had no more than one loaf in the boat; and when he warned them, 'Look well, and avoid the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the leaven of Herod,' they said anxiously to one another, 'We have brought no bread.'

Jesus knew it, and said, 'Men of little faith, what is this anxiety, that you have brought no bread with you? Have you no sense, no wits, even now? Is your heart still dull? Have you eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear; do you remember nothing? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?'

They told him, 'Twelve.'

'And when I broke the seven loaves among the four thousand, how many hampers full of broken pieces did you take up then?'

And they told him, 'Seven.'

Then he said to them, 'How could you suppose that I was thinking of bread, when I said, "Have nothing to do with the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"?''

Then they understood that his warning was against the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, not against leavened bread.



They sailed on past Capharnaum further south, pulling in to the shore late in the evening, somewhere along the southern end of the plain of Genesareth. Next morning Jesus' observant enemies came out from Magdala, and began disputing about his Messianic claims. They wanted him to work some striking wonder for all to see (p. 228); something fantastic and spectacular, maybe a chariot and horses in the sky (like Elias), or manna falling from heaven (like Moses). The mention of 'heaven' suggested an illustration to our Lord; they were always looking up at the sky, forecasting the weather; if only they could reason from his miracles and teaching, as well as they can foretell rain (p. 240).

### **Magdala to Bethsaida July 29 A.D.**

The sudden departure of Jesus was due to the bad reception he received; his journey to the west coast of the lake had been fruitless. But it was part of his life as Man to be guided by events, without using his divine knowledge (p. 127). He was sad and thoughtful as the boat sailed north again. Even his apostles had been influenced by the arguments of the Pharisees; they, too, were looking for spectacular signs of Messianic power. He must warn them against this dangerous influence. An occasion was offered about midday, when they found there was no bread in the boat (they had left too hurriedly to take on provisions at Magdala).

Since they are talking of bread, he compares the influence of the Pharisees to leaven, which was a symbol of corruption, a secret and subtle evil (I Cor. 5, 6-8). When they fail to see the application, our Lord gives them a lesson in how to think (a good sample of his way of training them during the past two months). It probably took up most of the voyage back to Bethsaida. Keeping to the thought of bread, he recalls, by the quiz-system, the two great miracles of the loaves (only two minor details are recorded here). They are being trained to see things as he saw them; not only to live with him, but to think like him. A mind enlightened by faith sees beyond the material bread to the spiritual reality: his miracles are signs of divine power, and his teaching is concerned with moral and religious truth, not the material needs of daily life.



### **A Blind Man Sees Trees Walking**

So they came to Bethsaida. And they brought to him a blind man, whom they entreated him to touch. He took the blind man by the hand, and led him outside the village; then he spat into his eyes, and laid his hands on him, and asked him, 'Can you see anything?'

He looked up and said, 'These must be men I see; it is as though I had a vision of trees walking to and fro.'

Once more Jesus laid his hands upon his eyes; and now, peering about, he found himself recovered; he could see everything clearly. Then he bade him go home without so much as passing through the village.

### **Peter's Profession of Faith**

Then Jesus went with his disciples into the villages round Caesarea Philippi; and in a lonely place on the way, after he had spent some time in prayer, he asked his disciples, 'What do men say of the Son of Man? Who do they think he is?'

'Some say John the Baptist,' they told him, 'others Elias, others again, Jeremy, others, that one of the old prophets has returned to life.'

Jesus said to them, 'And what of you? Who do you say that I am?'

Then Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jona; it is not flesh and blood, it is my Father in heaven that has revealed this to you. And I tell you this in my turn, that you are Peter, and it is upon this rock that I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.'



Within twenty-four hours Peter's boat is back at its moorings in Bethsaida. There takes place the only gradual cure in the gospels (and the only scene recorded from Bethsaida). This man missed being cured before, probably because he lived outside the Village.

At first he sees things obscurely; he cannot tell a man from a tree, unless it moves (he knows that trees don't walk). By only gradually restoring his sight, our Lord may have been testing his faith. He surely was giving a lesson to his apostles; a visual demonstration of his method of instructing them. Like the blind man, their minds only slowly and in stages came to the knowledge of the truth about Jesus; soon they will possess the full light of faith.

### Caesarea Philippi July 29 A.D.

It is midsummer when Jesus leads his chosen twelve towards mount Hermon, towering above prince Philip's capital, for their final test. They have been in his company for eighteen months. They are now having a last few days of prayer and solitude, the grace of God working deep in their souls. Peter rises to the occasion, speaking for the twelve: Jesus is both the Messiah and the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. That Peter here confesses the divinity of Jesus for the first time is clear from our Lord's reply; this is the climax of his training of the twelve.

There is joy in our Lord's voice as he now unfolds the part to be played by Peter in the kingdom (called 'church' for the first time): he is to hold the supreme authority of Jesus himself. He is to be the solid foundation of the building ('Peter' and 'rock' are the same word in Aramaic, *Kepha*), of which Jesus is the architect; the visible head of the church militant in the battle against the kingdom of Satan.

The power of the 'keys' makes Peter the steward of the house of God; he can admit or exclude anyone he wishes. 'Bind and loose' is a Jewish legal term for the power to take disciplinary action, and also to make and interpret laws. The new society on earth is now organized for the salvation of all men; divine



Then he strictly forbade them to tell any man that he was the Christ.

### **The Doctrine of the Cross**

From that time onwards Jesus began to make it known to his disciples that the Son of Man must go up to Jerusalem, and there, with much ill usage, be rejected by the chief priests and elders and scribes, and be put to death, and rise again on the third day. This he told them openly; whereupon Peter, drawing him to his side, began remonstrating with him; 'Never, Lord,' he said; 'no such thing shall befall you.'

But he turned about, and seeing his disciples there, rebuked Peter; 'Back, Satan,' he said; 'you are a stone in my path; for these thoughts of yours are man's, not God's.'

And he called his disciples to him, and the crowd with them, and said to them all alike, 'If any man has a mind to come my way, let him renounce self, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. The man who tries to save his life will lose it; it is the man who loses his life for my sake and for the gospel's sake, that will save it. How is a man the better for it, if he gains the whole world at the expense of losing his own soul? For a man's soul, what price can be high enough? If anyone is ashamed of acknowledging me and my words before this unfaithful and wicked generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed to acknowledge him, when he comes in his glory, with his Father and the holy angels to glorify him; he will recompense everyone, then, according to his works.'

And he said to them, 'Believe me, there are those standing here who will not taste of death before they have seen the kingdom of God present in all its power.'

### **The Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Six days afterwards Jesus took Peter and James and his brother John with him, and led them up on to a high



authority to rule it in matters of discipline, doctrine and morals is centred in the person of the supreme head, Peter.

A change now comes over the gospel story; a change in direction. All roads have been leading to Caesarea Philippi; Peter's act of faith has been the objective of our Lord's instructions. He now turns his eyes towards Jerusalem; there he is to die. Peter has just confessed his belief that Jesus is God; he must remember that he is also Man. They must get all ideas of an earthly triumph right out of their heads; as man he must suffer and die. And this at the hands of the accepted leaders of Israel, not the Gentiles. Up till this, our Lord has made only veiled references to his coming death (pp. 46, 48, 74, 146); this is the first clear, express declaration. Only faith in his divinity could stand up under this severe blow. Peter is shocked at the thought of it; the Master is overwrought; he needs cheering up. Enlightened by faith, Peter was solid rock; with human reason alone, he is a mere stone by the roadside. Our Lord is stern in his rebuke; he will not be turned aside from the way of the cross; Satan proposed this same way out to him when he suggested an alliance, at the beginning of his ministry (p. 36).

Jesus now points out the way to perfection: (1) The Cross. An expressive symbol of suffering, well understood by the Jews since the Roman occupation. It will take on a new meaning after Jesus' crucifixion. (2) Follow me. Not accompany me from place to place, but live my life; it is a personal, individual relationship, so well expressed by St. Paul (Galatians 2, 19-20).

The sombre prospect of the cross raised a difficulty about the speedy coming of the kingdom, promised by John (p. 30) and Jesus (p. 62). It will not be delayed long; it will be realized in the lifetime of at least some here today. (Actually the church was well established within thirty years. See Romans 10, 18.)

### **Mount Hermon 6 August 29 A.D.**

The 'six days' is from Peter's confession; it is the only example of an exact interval in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark,



mountain to pray; here they were alone. And even as he prayed, he was transfigured in their presence; the fashion of his face was altered, shining like the sun, and his garments became bright, dazzling white as the light, white as no fuller here on earth could have made them. And two men appeared conversing with him, Moses and Elias, seen now in glory; and they spoke of the death which he was to achieve in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, Peter and his companions were sunk in sleep; and they awoke to see him in his glory, and the two men standing with him.

And just as these were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is well that we should be here; if it pleases you, let us make three arbours in this place, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elias.' But he spoke at random; he did not know what to say, for they were overcome with fear.

Even before he had finished speaking, a shining cloud formed, overshadowing them; they saw those others disappear into the cloud, and were terrified. And now, there was a voice which said to them out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; to him, then, listen.'

The disciples, when they heard it, fell on their faces, overcome with fear; but Jesus came near and roused them with his touch; 'Arise,' he said, 'do not be afraid.' Then, on a sudden, they looked round them, and saw no one any more, but Jesus only with them.

### **Elias Has Come Already**

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus warned them, 'Do not tell anybody of what you have seen, until the Son of Man has risen from the dead'; so they kept the matter to themselves, wondering what the words could mean, 'When he has risen from the dead.'

And his disciples asked him, 'Tell us, why is it that the Pharisees and scribes say Elias must come before Christ?'



Luke), outside the Passion. There is special reason for linking this scene with Peter's act of faith; it is a divine confirmation of Jesus' God-head. First, in the dazzling appearance of Jesus; for a moment his divine nature shines out through his mortal body. The Greek word for 'transfigured' indicates a change in nature, not just the glorification of his human nature; it is the same word, *morphe* ('nature'), as in Philippians 2, 6-7. Secondly, from the voice of the Father out of the cloud, the Shekinah, symbol of God's presence during the forty years in the wilderness (Exodus 40, 32).

This extraordinary scene has no parallel in the gospels, except our Lord's agony in Gethsemani (p. 372). Here he is manifestly divine; there he is obviously human. That is why the same three apostles witness both; it is to strengthen their faith to withstand his passion and death. Notice that it comes immediately after the first prophecy of Jesus' death, and that Moses and Elias are speaking to him on the same subject. St. Leo says that the main purpose of the Transfiguration was 'to remove the scandal of the cross.' It is this concern for Jesus' life that probably makes Peter propose to build three huts of boughs; Jesus would be safe from his enemies here on the lonely slopes of Hermon.

Our Lord had probably spent the night in prayer. The apostles were awakened, not by the morning sun, but by a supernatural light from the face of him who made the sun. Both 'light' and 'white,' throughout the scriptures, are the usual characteristics of God's presence (Apocalypse 1, 14-16). Both Peter (2 Peter 1, 16-18) and John (p. 38) make reference to this scene in their writings, as the outstanding manifestation of Jesus' divinity.

Moses and Elias appeared, representing the law and the prophets; a clear demonstration that Jesus' teaching was not opposed to the Old Testament, as the Pharisees charged. The sight of Elias reminded them that he was rather late in showing up; and now he had disappeared again. (Just how they recognized him and Moses, is not clear; possibly from their conversation.) He had an important role to play in the glorious enthronement of



He answered, 'Elias must needs come and restore all things as they were; but I tell you this, that Elias has come already, and they did not recognize him, but misused him at their pleasure, as the scriptures tell of him, just as the Son of Man is to suffer much at their hands, and be despised.'

Then the disciples understood that he had been speaking to them of John the Baptist.

### **Jesus Cures an Epileptic Boy**

When they reached the other disciples, on the next day, they found a great crowd gathered around them, and some of the scribes disputing with them. The crowd, as soon as they saw him, were overcome with awe, and ran up to welcome him.

He asked them, 'What is the dispute you are holding with them?'

And now, from the midst of this crowd, a man came up and knelt before him. 'I entreat you, Master,' he said, 'look with favour upon my son; he is my only child. He is an epileptic, and in great affliction; there are times when a dumb spirit seizes upon him, making him cry out suddenly, and throws him into a convulsion; it tears him, and he foams at the mouth, and gnashes his teeth, and his limbs grow stiff; then it goes away, but only with a pang which lacerates him. And I entreated your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.'

And Jesus answered them, 'Ah, faithless and misguided generation, how long must I be with you, how long must I bear with you? Bring him to me.'

So they brought the boy to him; and the evil spirit, as soon as it saw him, threw the boy into a convulsion, so that he fell on the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth.

And now Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?'



the Messias; at least so the Pharisees told the people.

Our Lord answered their question by telling them, (1) that the teaching of the Pharisees was correct (it was taken from the prophet Malachy); but (2) the name 'Elias' (Mal. 4, 5) was not meant to be understood of that particular individual; it indicated one zealous for God's honour. It was fulfilled in John (pp. 6, 102); he suffered at the hands of a weak king and an evil woman (pp. 134-136), just as Elias did (Achab and Jezabel, 3 Kings, 17-19).

Our Lord left the nine at Caesarea Philippi while he climbed the western slopes of Hermon with the other three. He was absent at least three days. August 6 (the liturgical date of the Transfiguration) fell on a Saturday in 29 A.D. I propose this itinerary: they spent Friday climbing the mountain; Saturday, about dawn, Jesus was seen transfigured; they started back that same day, arriving at Caesarea Philippi on Sunday morning.

This reconstruction of events is based on Hermon as the site of the Transfiguration. The gospels simply call it 'a high mountain.' Hermon (9,000 feet) is the highest mountain in that part of the world; but it is only a recent claimant. The most popular identification is mount Tabor (2,000 feet). It has been accepted by pilgrims since the fourth century. A Franciscan church and hospice perpetuate the tradition to the present day. It is only because of the evidence from the gospels themselves that I have abandoned this traditional site. (1) It is not until the next scene that the gospels bring our Lord back into Galilee, which he has been avoiding since June. A journey to Tabor, which is in south Galilee, would have taken him there already. (2) St. Mark (8, 27-9, 29) clearly supposes the same one locality. (3) The presence of a crowd places the scene outside Galilee; there, Jesus would have taken measures beforehand to avoid such a gathering. (4) Tabor is too small for Jesus to need a day coming back from the Transfiguration; he would take scarcely an hour. Neither would it give the solitude he was seeking; there was a fortress on the summit. Peter would hardly have proposed it as a safe refuge from his enemies. (5) The choice of Tabor in the fourth century



‘From childhood,’ he said; ‘and often it has thrown him into the fire, and into water, to make an end of him. Come, have pity on us, and help us if you can.’

But Jesus said, ‘If you can! To him who believes, everything is possible.’

Whereupon the father of the boy cried aloud, ‘Lord, I do believe; succour my unbelief.’

And Jesus, seeing how a crowd was gathering round them, rebuked the unclean spirit; ‘You dumb and deaf spirit,’ he said, ‘it is I that command you; come out of him, and never enter into him again.’

With that, crying aloud and throwing him into a violent convulsion, it came out of him, and he lay there like a corpse, so that many declared, ‘He is dead.’

But Jesus took hold of his hand, and raised him, and he stood up; and he gave him to his father. So that all were amazed at this great evidence of God’s power.

When he had gone into a house, and they were alone, the disciples asked him, ‘Why was it that we could not cast it out?’

And he told them, ‘Because you had no faith. I promise you, if you have faith, though it be but as a grain of mustard seed, you have only to say to this mountain, “Remove from this place to that,” and it will remove; nothing will be impossible to you. But there is no way of casting out such spirits as this except by prayer and fasting.’

### **Second Prophecy of Passion and Death**

Then they left those parts, and passed straight through Galilee, and he would not let anyone know of his passage; he spent the time teaching his disciples. ‘Remember this well,’ he said; ‘the Son of Man is to be given up into the hands of men. They will put him to death, and he will rise again after three days.’



could easily have been for reasons of convenience. Hermon was too far away (thirty miles north of the lake), whereas Tabor was right on the pilgrim route from Naim to Nazareth. (The pilgrim church of the Loaves and Fishes was built at Tabgha because of the difficulty of access to the actual site on the plain of Bataiha, pp. 136-142.)

Jesus' arrival was unexpected and opportune. Possibly he came back so soon because he knew of the embarrassing situation of the nine. They had cast out many devils already (p. 134); but this one resisted all their efforts. Some of the local Jewish leaders were not making matters any easier by their comments. The apostles' lack of success had sadly undermined the father's faith; so our Lord's chief concern was to build up and strengthen it, while giving the apostles a needed lesson. The crowd, too, standing by, were more interested in seeing a spectacle, than in understanding the purpose of Jesus' coming among them; that is why he sorrowfully called them a 'faithless and misguided generation.'

This was a particularly difficult case of possession (Lagrange suggests that 'deaf and dumb' refers mainly to the evil spirit; he refused to answer the apostles, and so they had nothing on which they could lay hold). Seeing that the usual technique of exorcism was unsuccessful, they should have resorted to extraordinary measures; they should have stormed heaven with 'prayer and fasting.' Such were the means Jesus himself had used in his war with Satan (pp. 34-36); he it is they must imitate in all their actions.

This is the most detailed account in the gospels of the physical effects of possession; it is even more vivid than the story of the Gerasene demoniac, recorded eight months earlier (pp. 122-124).

### North Galilee August 29 A.D.

The month of August had been momentous for the apostles; they had learned to believe that Jesus was not only their Master; he was their God. Our Lord now left the territory of prince Philip and entered Galilee, about ten miles north of the lake, on his way to Capharnaum. His gaze goes beyond Capharnaum to the southern limit of this new journey, to Jerusalem. His mind



And they were overcome with sorrow. But they could not understand what he said; it was hidden from them, so that they could not perceive the meaning of it; and they were afraid to ask him about this saying of his.

### **A Child a Lesson to the Twelve**

So they came to Capharnaum, and there, when they were in the house, he asked them, 'What was the dispute you were holding on the way?' They said nothing, for they had been disputing among themselves which should be the greatest of them in the kingdom of heaven.

Then he sat down, and called the twelve to him; he knew what was occupying their thoughts, so he said to them, 'If anyone has a mind to be the greatest, he must be the least of all, and the servant of all.'

Whereupon Jesus called to his side a little child, and gave it a place in the midst of them; and he took it in his arms, and said to them: 'Believe me, unless you become like little children again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. He is greatest in the kingdom of heaven who will abase himself like this little child. Whoever welcomes such a child as this in my name, welcomes me: and whoever welcomes me, welcomes, not me, but him that sent me.'

And John answered him, 'Master, we saw a man who does not follow in our company casting out devils in your name, and we forbade him to do it.'

But Jesus said, 'Forbid him no more; no one who does a miracle in my name will lightly speak evil of me. The man who is not against us is on our side.'

'He who gives a prophet the welcome due to a prophet shall receive the reward given to prophets; and he who gives a just man the welcome due to a just man shall receive the reward given to just men. And if a man gives so much as a draught of cold water to one of the least of these here, because he is a disciple of mine, I promise you,



is steeped in the thought of his coming death; the divine decree weighs heavily upon him; it is a foretaste (pp. 240, 304) of the agony in the garden of Gethsemani. But he receives no comfort from the twelve; his earlier rebuke (p. 170) makes them slow to speak.

### Capharnaum September 29 A.D.

Three months had passed since Jesus and his apostles had gone out from Capharnaum. They were now coming back home. They felt secure and confident again, as they noted, with pleasure and excitement, the familiar landmarks along the shore of the lake below them. As they followed after him, out of earshot, they began discussing the kingdom, and the positions they would soon take up in it. It was a subject they never tired of (pp. 290, 346); each one so sure of his own ability and fitness for the task.

Soon after the first greetings from his mother, Jesus found himself alone with the twelve, probably in Peter's house. Did they really think that they could hide anything from God? How hard it was to make them realize that true greatness lay in the conquest of self; that humble and charitable service to others raised a man high in the sight of God.

Jesus, the skilled Teacher, looks about him for some illustration; something striking to impress this truth upon them; and so a small boy becomes a visual aid in the instruction of the twelve. (An early tradition identifies him with St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch; it seems more likely that he was one of Peter's children.) With his usual artistry, our Lord builds his lesson round this child. The twelve are thinking in terms of kings and subjects, basing their kingdom on that of Rome and the Herods. In Jesus' kingdom the relation is that of father and child; his kingdom is a family, not a military organization. Humility, childlike trust and affection are what he is looking for in members of his kingdom (a lesson which St. Therese of Lisieux understood so well).

St. John speaks his only recorded words in the Galilean ministry; his conscience is troubled by his own harsh attitude in an earlier episode (probably when the twelve were sent out two and two, p. 132), in contrast to the kindly tone of Jesus. (This



he shall not miss his reward. He who gives welcome to such a child as this in my name, gives welcome to me.

‘And if anyone hurts the conscience of one of these little ones, that believe in me, he had better have been drowned in the depths of the sea, with a millstone hung about his neck. Woe to the world, for the hurt done to consciences! It must needs be that such hurt should come, but woe to the man through whom it comes! See to it that you do not treat one of these little ones with contempt; I tell you, they have angels of their own in heaven, that behold the face of my heavenly Father continually.

‘Tell me this, if a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave those ninety-nine others on the mountain side, and go out to look for the one that is straying? And if, by good fortune, he finds it, he rejoices more, believe me, over that one, than over the ninety-nine which never strayed from him. So too it is not your heavenly Father’s pleasure that one of these little ones should be lost.

‘If your hand is an occasion of falling to you, cut it off; better for you to enter into life maimed, than to have two hands when you go into hell, into unquenchable fire. And if your foot is an occasion of falling to you, cut it off; better for you to enter into life lame, than to have both feet when you are cast into hell. And if your eye is an occasion of falling, pluck it out; better for you to enter with one eye into the kingdom of God, than to have two eyes when you are cast into hell; the worm which eats them there never dies, the fire is never quenched. Fire will be every man’s seasoning.

‘Salt is a good thing, but if the salt becomes tasteless, what will you use to season it with? It is no use either to the soil or to the dung-heap; it will be thrown away altogether. Listen, you that have ears to hear with; you must have salt in yourselves, and keep peace among you.



is a good example of how the disciples were learning to imitate our Lord in all their actions.) Our Lord solves John's difficulty by stating the principle of tolerance; not to reject the co-operation of those outside the Church when there is question of doing good; remember what unites, not what divides us (for a different principle, see p. 226).

Then, in his easy conversational manner, Jesus returns to the child. This time he wishes to emphasize the dignity, not the humility, of a disciple. Just as a child's importance comes from his father, a disciple's comes from Jesus; what is done to them is done to him. That is why a rich reward will be paid for any charitable act done to a member of the kingdom, and why any hurt done will be punished severely (pp. 338-340).

Looking into the future, and seeing the loss of so many souls for whom he is soon to die, our Lord is moved to urge his apostles to greater zeal. The guardian angels (the only time they are mentioned in the gospels) of neglected souls will be watching and reporting all the time. The shepherd in search of a lost sheep is to be the model of their concern for the outcast (pp. 212, 256). But they must not neglect their own salvation; there is need of great effort and continual mortification to gain eternal life. Nothing must be allowed to stand in the way, no matter how precious it may be; what is held dearest, such as an eye, must be sacrificed when it is a danger to salvation. It is a vital matter; either eternal life or the 'unquenchable fire' of hell.

A fire that burns but does not destroy suggests salt, which penetrates and preserves. Our Lord uses the image of salt to emphasize again the influence of the apostles on the world around them (as in the Sermon on the Mount, p. 86). Throughout this informal instruction our Lord passes easily from one idea to another; the mention of salt brings him back to the original cause of the lesson, the dispute among the twelve. Salt signifies bright, lively talk (Colossians 4, 6); such talk has been the cause of dissension among them. They must beware of sins of the tongue, a common cause of jealousy and rivalry among brethren (James 3).



‘If your brother does wrong, go at once and tax him with it, as a private matter between you and him; and so, if he will listen to you, you have won your brother. If he will not listen to you, take with you one or two more, that the whole matter may be certified by the voice of two or three witnesses. If he will not listen to them, then speak of it to the church; and if he will not even listen to the church, then count him all one with the heathen and the publican. I promise you, all that you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

‘And moreover I promise you, that if two of you agree over any request that you make on earth, it will be granted them by my Father who is in heaven. Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.’

### **Parable of the Unforgiving Servant**

Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often must I see my brother do me wrong, and still forgive him; as much as seven times?’

Jesus said to him, ‘If he does you wrong seven times in the day, and seven times comes back to you and says, “I am sorry,” you shall forgive him. I tell you to forgive, not seven wrongs, but seventy times seven.

‘Here is an image of the kingdom of heaven; there was a king who resolved to enter into a reckoning with his servants, and had scarcely begun the reckoning, when one was brought before him who was ten thousand talents in his debt. He had no means of making payment; whereupon his master gave orders that he should be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and so the debt should be paid.

‘With that the servant fell at his feet and said, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you in full.” And his



The recent division among the twelve showed how false was their idea of the church. The church is one; they must be united in their government, as well as in their prayers. They must think alike, and act alike, in union with Jesus. Unity is the theme of our Lord's remarks; it will be his final prayer for his chosen leaders (pp. 368-370). Charity will try all means before imposing sentence of excommunication; their authority must not make them harsh. For the good of its members, and to preserve its unity, the church is given the same powers that Jesus promised to Peter at Caesarea Philippi (p. 168). They are a body organized for the salvation of men, not for their condemnation. Like the Good Shepherd, they must try to bring back those that stray.

And in their prayers it is not the worth of the individual that counts; the power and efficacy of their prayers comes from the church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ; our Lord himself prays through and in union with his members.

Peter had been doing some deep thinking. He was to rule the church with the authority given by Jesus himself. Our Lord had just explained to his apostles how to exercise that authority with kindness and prudence, in the case of an erring brother; they must show great patience with the sinner, trying to win him back before imposing sentence of excommunication. There was another problem worrying Peter: the matter of personal injuries. (Probably he had been the main target in the dispute about the first place in the kingdom, which had given rise to Jesus' instruction.) The Master had, of course, counselled forgiveness of injuries; he had told them to 'turn the other cheek,' in his Sermon of the Mount (pp. 90-92). But he had not said how many times. As the leader, Peter ought to know what procedure should be adopted, for future reference. Should his authority to punish ('bind') be used after a certain number of transgressions? The Pharisees taught that after three even God would not pardon a fourth time. But Peter knew how forgiving Jesus was; maybe in



master, moved with pity for him, let the servant go and discharged him of his debt.

‘So the servant went out, and met with a fellow servant of his, who owed him a hundred pieces of silver; whereupon he caught hold of him and took him by the throat, and said, “Pay me all you owe me.”

‘His fellow servant went down on his knees in entreaty; “Have patience with me,” he said, “and I will pay you.”

‘But the other refused; he went away and committed him to prison for such time as the debt was unpaid. The rest of the servants were full of indignation when they saw this done, and went in to tell their master, who said to him, “I remitted all that debt of yours, you wicked servant, at your entreaty; was it not your duty to have mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” And his master, in anger, gave him over to be tortured until the debt was paid.

‘It is thus my heavenly Father will deal with you, if brother does not forgive brother with all his heart.’

### **A Coin in a Fish’s Mouth**

Soon after they arrived at Capharnaum, the collectors of the Temple pence approached Peter, and asked, ‘Does not your master pay the Temple pence?’

‘Yes,’ he said.

Soon afterwards he came into the house, and Jesus forestalled him; ‘Simon,’ he said, ‘tell us what you think; on whom do earthly kings impose customs and taxes, on their own sons or strangers?’

‘On strangers,’ Peter told him.

And Jesus said to him, ‘Why then, the children go free. But we will not hurt their consciences; go down to the sea, and cast your hook; take out the first fish you draw up, and when you have opened its mouth you will find a silver coin there; with this make payment to them for me and for yourself.’



his kingdom they could extend pardon even up to seven times.

Our Lord's reply does away with all counting and book-keeping; if a man is sorry, always forgive him, no matter how many times he offends. ('Seventy times seven' is a scriptural expression for a great number, Genesis 4, 24.) And the parable explains the reason why: we are all bankrupts, all beggars, all sinners; we have merited the torments of hell. Since God has remitted so much, the least we can do is to be easy creditors ourselves. Unforgiveness is especially heinous in the forgiven.

The parable is based on oriental monarchies and their laws. The punishment of wife and family was an accepted principle (Joshua 7, 24); torture was used often to force the prisoner to reveal hidden wealth. The contrast between the two debts is about a million to one; like a drop of water compared to the boundless ocean, says St. John Chrysostom. The first debtor must have been an official of the king, to have the use of so much money; an apt allusion to Peter, the vicar of Christ. Possibly 'ten thousand' is a reference to the ten commandments, which sinful man has broken; they represent the long list of debts incurred with God.

Every male over twenty was obliged to contribute two drachmas (about two days' pay, p. 281) annually for the upkeep of the temple. This was collected by the priests (Sadducees, not Pharisees) from the paschal feast until Tabernacles, now only a few weeks away. The collectors insinuated that Jesus had been trying to avoid the tax by keeping away from the lakeside for the past three months. Peter hurried home to get the money, intending to pay them without worrying our Lord about it.

He has to be reminded again that Jesus is divine. Who ever heard of a son paying taxes to his father? (Taxes were for the use of the king's household, not for public utilities.) And the apostles, too, because of their relation to Jesus, are no longer subjects; they are God's sons (Romans 8, 14-17). The coin in the fish's mouth was a four drachma piece (also called a stater or shekel, p. 19); the exact amount to pay the tax for both Jesus and Peter, his vicar.



### **Farewell to the Lakeside Cities**

Then he took occasion to reproach for their impenitence the cities in which he had done most of his miracles: 'Woe to you, Corozain, woe to you, Bethsaida: Tyre and Sidon would have repented in sackcloth and ashes long ago, if the miracles done in you had been done there instead. And I say this, that it shall go less hard with Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than with you.

'And you, Capharnaum, do you hope to be lifted up high as heaven? You shall be brought low as hell. Sodom itself, if the miracles done in you had been done there, might have stood to this day. And I say this, that it shall go less hard with the country of Sodom at the day of judgment than with you.'



**On Road to Nazareth September 29 A.D.**

One morning towards the end of September, Jesus and his twelve walk out of Capharnaum along the road to Nazareth. There are no crowds lining the way, no demonstrations of regret at his departure from the city where he has lived for the past eighteen months. On the high cliffs above Magdala, he stops for his last look at the lake, not to admire the view but to utter words of condemnation. The three cities along the north-west shore have shut their eyes to the evidence of his mighty miracles. God has walked among them, lavish with his grace; a terrible fate awaits them when they stand before him as their judge. It is a tragic ending to the ministry by the lake of Galilee. It will be repeated six months later, when Jesus speaks sorrowful words over the city of Jerusalem (pp. 302, 324); it also will reject him and put him to death.



## *Chapter 8:* The Judean Ministry



THE next five chapters (8-12) are focused on Jerusalem; it is there that our Lord is to accomplish his primary mission, the redemption of the world. The Galilean ministry (chapters 3-7) was devoted mainly to his training of the twelve foundation members of the kingdom (p. 55); his own personal work of atonement was not given prominence until Caesarea Philippi (p. 170).

Matthew and Mark take our Lord direct from Galilee to Jerusalem for his passion and death; but Luke fills in the six months' gap by giving some details of our Lord's activity in Judea (chapter 8) and Perea (chapter 9); these three gospels then join up for the rest of our Lord's life (chapters 10-12). John goes his own way, filling in what the other three have passed over; Jerusalem is the central point for the whole of his gospel.

In this chapter the only place, apart from Jerusalem, that can be identified with certainty is *Bethany*. The home of Jesus' lifelong friends, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, becomes the headquarters for his mission in Judea, just as Capharnaum was in Galilee (p. 64). Unlike Galilee there is no close link between events; there is little indication of either time or place; there is less incident, and more instruction; only three miracles are recorded (three also in chapter 9); it is a different world from Galilee.

There is now a more sombre tone in the story. The pleasant blue waters of the lake are far away; the hard, sinister, stone walls of Jerusalem dominate the scene. There is a tenseness in the air; time is running out fast; Israel must repent before it is too late; this is their last opportunity. Even our Lord's instructions to his apostles are concerned with danger and persecution to come; they are being prepared not only for their future work, but for the great trial of the passion and death of the Master.

The Jewish leaders at Jerusalem were opposed to Jesus right from his first public appearance there (p. 46); the issue became clearer on his second visit (pp. 152-158). Now, on his third visit, with hatred in their hearts, they definitely reject him who is their Saviour and their God (pp. 192-206).



## Jesus Delays in Galilee

And now the time was drawing near for his taking away from the earth, and he turned his eyes steadfastly towards the way that led to Jerusalem. One of the Jewish feasts, the feast of Tabernacles, was drawing near. And his brethren said to him, "This is no place for you; go to Judea, so that your disciples also may see your doings. Nobody is content to act in secret, if he wishes to make himself known at large; if you must needs act thus, show yourself before the world." For even his brethren were without faith in him.

Whereupon Jesus said to them, "My opportunity has not come yet. Your opportunity is always ready to hand; the world cannot be expected to hate you, but it does hate me, because I denounce it for its evil doings. It is for you to go up for the feast; I am not going up for the feast, because for me the time is not ripe yet." And, saying so much to them, he stayed behind in Galilee.

## The Feast of Tabernacles

But afterwards, when his brethren had gone up for the feast, he too went up, not publicly, but as if he would keep himself hidden. And he sent messengers before him, who came into a Samaritan village, to make all in readiness. But the Samaritans refused to receive him, because his journey was in the direction of Jerusalem. When they found this, two of his disciples, James and John, asked him, "Lord, would you have us bid fire come down from heaven, and consume them?"

But he turned and rebuked them: "You do not understand," he said, "what spirit it is you share. The Son of Man has come to save men's lives, not to destroy them." And so they passed on to another village.

The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and asked, "Where can he be?"



**Nazareth October 29 A.D.**

It was autumn, and the grapes had just been gathered in; preparations were being made all over the country to go up to Jerusalem for the festival of thanksgiving for the harvest. It was also a great national feast, during which the people lived in huts made of boughs, in memory of their forty years tent-dwelling (Tabernacles) in the wilderness. It was a merry carnival time, when national spirits ran high.

Our Lord and his twelve arrived at Nazareth, from the lakeside, as the family pilgrimage was being organized. These same relatives of his had come down to Capharnaum, just a year before (p. 106), to reprimand him, and give advice on how to conduct himself. He had not listened to them, and look what had happened to him in the past six months! He was a complete failure in Galilee; even many of his own disciples had left him. And for the last three months he had been in hiding away to the north. Now, that was not the way to establish himself: an imposing entry into Jerusalem at the coming feast would stir up Messianic enthusiasm.

**Jerusalem October 29 A.D.**

God had his own plan for the triumph of his Son: he was to be lifted up on a cross, not on the shoulders of an enthusiastic mob. Jerusalem was to play its part in his triumph; but the time for this final act was still six months off. Meanwhile, he would go along quietly and calmly, giving the leaders in Jerusalem a logical, rational exposition of his claims.

If Jesus left Nazareth on Sunday, 16 October, a day after the feast began at Jerusalem, he could arrive on Wednesday morning, by taking the more direct route through Samaria. Ordinarily the Jews went down the Jordan valley, a longer but safer route. It was only the need for haste that prompted Jesus to take the shorter route. The reaction of James and John to the hostile attitude of the Samaritans shows how well our Lord had named them 'sons of thunder' (p. 82). They were probably thinking of Elias, a man most zealous for the honour of God, when they



Among the crowd, there was much whispering about him; some said, 'He is a good man.'

'No,' said others, 'he leads the people astray.' But for fear of the Jews, nobody dared to speak of him openly.

And it was not till the feast was half over that Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach there. The Jews were astonished; 'How does this man know how to read?' they asked; 'he has never studied.'

Jesus answered, 'The learning which I impart is not my own, it comes from him who sent me. Anyone who is prepared to do his will, can tell for himself whether such learning comes from God, or whether I am delivering a message of my own. The man who delivers a message of his own seeks to win credit for himself; when a man seeks to win credit for one who sent him, he tells the truth, there is no dishonesty in him. Moses, for example; was it not Moses that gave you the law? And yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you design to kill me?'

The crowd answered, 'You are possessed; who has a design to kill you?'

Jesus answered them, 'There is one action of mine which has astounded you all. Listen to this; because Moses prescribed circumcision for you' (not that it comes from Moses, it comes from the patriarchs), 'you are ready to circumcise a man on the sabbath day; and if a man receives circumcision on the sabbath, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, have you any right to be indignant with me, for restoring a man's whole strength to him on the sabbath? Be honest in your judgments instead of judging by appearances.'

### **Jesus Teaches in the Temple**

At this, some of those who belonged to Jerusalem began to ask, 'Is not this the man they design to put to death? Yet here he is, speaking publicly, and they have nothing



proposed their drastic punishment by fire (4 Kings 1). In his reply, our Lord keeps up the Elias theme (Samaria was Elias-country); 'spirit' is a reference to Eliseus' request of the departing Elias (4 Kings 2, 9); it is a spirit of charity (p. 60), not of revenge.

On the other two occasions when Jesus had come up to Jerusalem during his public ministry, there was no mention of him teaching. At the paschal feast in 28 A.D. he had driven the temple merchants from the Gentiles' Court; at the paschal feast in 29 A.D. (six months ago) the Sanhedrin had interviewed him privately. But now he acted like one of the authorized teachers, the rabbis; all were wondering where he had acquired such learning; he had never studied in the schools at Jerusalem.

Our Lord took occasion of these comments of the crowd to make an important distinction between himself and the other teachers. Their purpose in teaching was to win popular acclaim; they wanted people to say, 'Rabbi X is a genius. Have you heard his opinion on this point of law?' But Jesus was delivering God's message; he had no self-interest. He appeals to the testimony of a good conscience; if the people are rightly disposed, and seek God's will, they should be able to see that it is Jesus who has the truth, not the scribes and Pharisees.

The leaders had intended to kill him at the previous Passover; the people did not know of this, since it was a decision taken in council. So they must be warned against this ill will and hatred of their leaders; Jesus tells them of the incident, and demonstrates the injustice of the leaders' antagonism. The law of charity (healing the cripple, p. 152) sets aside the sabbath regulation; there is no conflict, the higher law suspends the lower. They themselves admitted this in the case of circumcision (the law prescribed the eighth day after birth) on the sabbath.

Some of the citizens of Jerusalem, who had just joined the crowd, were better informed about the leaders' intentions than the pilgrims from the country. They were surprised to see Jesus



to say to him. Can the rulers have made up their minds in earnest, that this is the Christ? But then, we know this man's origins; when Christ appears, no one is to know whence he comes.'

Whereupon Jesus cried aloud as he taught in the temple, 'You know me, and you know whence I come; but I have not come on my own errand, I was sent by one who has a right to send; and him you do not know. I know him, because I come from him; it was he who sent me.'

And now they were ready to seize him; but none of them laid hands on him; his time had not yet come. And indeed, among the people there were many who learned to believe in him; they said, 'Can the Christ be expected to do more miracles at his coming than this man has done?' The Pharisees were told of these whispers about him among the people; and both chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

Then Jesus said, 'For a little while I am still with you, and then I am to go back to him who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not be able to find me; you cannot reach the place where I am.'

Whereupon the Jews said among themselves, 'Where can he mean to journey, that we should not be able to find him? Will he go to the Jews who are scattered about the Gentile world, and teach the Gentiles? What can it mean, this saying of his, "You will look for me, but you will not be able to find me; you cannot reach the place where I am"?'

### **The Crowd Divided Over Jesus**

On the last and greatest day of the feast Jesus stood there and cried aloud, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me, and drink; yes, if a man believes in me, as the scripture says, "Fountains of living water shall flow from his bosom." ' He was speaking here of the Spirit, which



speaking so openly; they expressed a well-known objection to his identity with the Messiah, whose coming would be shrouded in mystery; and who would appear suddenly. But Jesus had been a public figure in Galilee for almost two years; everyone knew that he had been living at Nazareth for years before that.

If only they knew how extraordinary his origin was: he had come from the Father in heaven; he was the Son in human form, an origin far surpassing all their theatrical imaginings of a super-man from the clouds. This claim of Jesus seemed to be going too far. There was wavering and hesitation among his audience. Some were for seizing him as a blasphemer; others, examining his claim in the light of his miracles, saw its validity, and found faith. The Sanhedrin ('chief priests and Pharisees') were alarmed at his impression on the crowd; they knew that force was the only weapon they could employ (p. 158).

They want to do away with him now, but a time of anguish will come when they will be looking for their Redeemer. They will not be able to find him, because he will have gone from them. They can find security only by faith in him; there is no other. There is urgency in his voice as he warns them of the shortness of time; soon he will be returning to his Father. Faith alone can give access to him there. His divine origin is clearly stated: just as he came from God, so he is going back to him. He does not say 'where I will be,' but 'where I am.' He always is with the Father, because he too is divine; he has never left his Father's side.

The hostile portion of the audience understood this as a Messianic expedition to the Jews and Gentiles living outside Palestine. Their minds were earthbound, and could not rise to heaven, of which Jesus was speaking.

### The Temple October 29 A.D.

At the morning sacrifice on the seventh day, water from the pool of Siloam was carried round the altar seven times, and then poured out upon the altar. It was a commemoration of the water from the rock in the wilderness; it was also a petition for the Lord to send rain on Palestine (the rainy season began soon



was to be received by those who learned to believe in him; the Spirit which had not yet been given to men, because Jesus had not yet been raised to glory.

Some of the crowd, on hearing these words, said, 'Beyond doubt this is the prophet.'

Others said, 'This is the Christ.'

And others again, 'Is the Christ, then, to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture told us that Christ is to come from the family of David, and from the village of Bethlehem, where David lived?'

Thus there was a division of opinion about him among the crowd; some of them would have seized him by violence, but no one laid hands on him.

Meanwhile the officers had gone back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why have you not brought him here?'

The officers answered, 'Nobody has ever spoken as this man speaks.'

And the Pharisees answered, 'Have you, too, let yourselves be deceived? Have any of the rulers come to believe in him yet, or of the Pharisees? As for these common folk who have no knowledge of the law, a curse is on them.'

Here Nicodemus, the same man who came to Jesus before, who was one of their number, asked, 'Is it the way of our law to judge a man without giving him a hearing first, and finding out what he is about?'

They answered him, 'Are you, too, from Galilee? Look in the scriptures; you will find that Galilee does not breed prophets.'

### **A Woman Taken in Adultery**

And they went back, each to his own home; Jesus meanwhile went to the mount of Olives. And at early morning he appeared again in the temple; all the common folk came to him, and he sat down there and began to teach them.



after this feast). Our Lord uses this ceremony to illustrate the streams of divine grace that will flow into his church, once the Holy Spirit comes at the following Pentecost. He used the image of water before, when he spoke to the Samaritan woman (p. 56). There he himself was the source of living water; here he goes a step further, and explains that anyone who believes in him will in his turn become a source of life to others. A Christian is not only united to Christ; grace flows through him to make others Christians; he becomes an instrument of divine grace.

Another difficulty was raised by the opposition element in the crowd; Jesus was a Galilean. It was clear from Micheas that he should be born at Bethlehem (p. 22). This shows that the circumstances of Jesus' birth were hidden from the people.

Our Lord did not become invisible to escape from the crowd and the temple police ('officers') who had been sent by the Sanhedrin to arrest him. It was the force of his Personality, as in the garden of Gethsemani (p. 376), that rendered them incapable of action. These men bear witness to the influence exercised by Jesus' words and presence on the common people; they could not help contrasting him with their other teachers. The Pharisees despised their audience as incapable of any goodness or understanding; Jesus loved them with a divine love. Their pride and arrogance had blinded them to the truth. That they were in bad faith, and cared little for the law that they pretended to be defending, is clear from their reply to Nicodemus; they answer his appeal to justice and reason by abuse: imagine the Messias coming from provincial Galilee!

Our Lord's discussion with Nicodemus, more than a year before (pp. 46-48), had not been fruitless. Quite likely St. John got his details of what went on in the Sanhedrin from him.

Our Lord spent the nights at Bethany on the eastern slopes of mount Olivet. Since the plan to arrest him had miscarried, the leaders decided on a stratagem: they knew his mercy to sinners; this case would force him to pronounce a judgment contrary to the Mosaic law. Not that they were concerned about the viola-



And now the scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman who had been found committing adultery, and made her stand there in full view; 'Master,' they said, 'this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Moses, in his law, prescribed that such persons should be stoned to death; what of you? What is your sentence?' They said this to put him to the test, hoping to find a charge to bring against him.

But Jesus bent down, and began writing on the ground with his finger. When he found that they continued to question him, he looked up and said to them, 'Whichever of you is free from sin shall cast the first stone at her.' Then he bent down again, and went on writing on the ground.

And they began to go out one by one, beginning with the eldest, till Jesus was left alone with the woman, still standing in full view. Then Jesus looked up, and asked her, 'Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?'

'No one, Lord,' she said.

And Jesus said to her, 'I will not condemn you either. Go, and do not sin again henceforward.'

### **I Am the Light of the World**

And now once more Jesus spoke to them, 'I am the light of world,' he said. 'He who follows me can never walk in darkness; he will possess the light which is life.'

Whereupon the Pharisees told him, 'You are testifying on your own behalf, your testimony is worth nothing.'

Jesus answered them, 'My testimony is trustworthy, even when I testify on my own behalf; I know whence I have come, and where I am going; you do not know whence I have come, you do not know where I am going. You set yourselves up to judge, after your earthly fashion; I do not set myself up to judge anybody. And what if I



tion of the law; if they were, they should have brought the other partner in the crime.

Jesus was sitting, probably on a cushion, on the pavement in Solomon's Porch. He bent over and idly traced on the paved stone with his finger; it was a sign of disinterestedness. He had not come to judge men; his work was to call sinners to repentance. And they were sinners, more in need of repentance than this sinful woman. If only they realized their own guilt in the sight of God, they would not be clamouring for punishment on any sinner. Their first obligation was to see that they were right with God, before judging others (p. 94). He bent over his tracing once more, the Psychologist giving their consciences time to work. They became uneasy, wondering just what he might say next. The older members were the first to sense danger, possibly because their consciences had more to reproach them with. (St. Jerome and others thought that Jesus wrote their sins in the dust, basing this on Jeremias 17, 13; it is only an ingenious conjecture.) Probably only the accusers withdrew; the apostles and members of the crowd remained with Jesus and the woman.

This incident is absent from so many important Greek MSS, that most scholars think it was not written by St. John, but added later by an unknown inspired disciple. It is a true story.

The feast of Tabernacles is over; the crowds have returned home. From now on the Jewish leaders are Jesus' main audience. Most of his discussions with them, lasting several days, took place in the Women's Court, where the Treasury was situated; the Sanhedrin headquarters (council chamber) were nearby.

During the feast, the Women's Court was illuminated in memory of the Shekinah, the luminous cloud of God's presence during the forty years in the wilderness. Our Lord's opening words are a topical allusion to this ceremony; they also serve as a theme for the rest of his discussion with the Pharisees. The Shekinah was light and guidance to the Jews; Jesus is the light of



should judge? My judgment is judgment indeed; it is not I alone, my Father who sent me is with me. Just so it is prescribed in your law, "The testimony of two men is trustworthy"; well, one is myself, testifying in my own behalf, and my Father who sent me testifies in my behalf too.'

Hereupon they said to him, 'Where is this Father of yours?'

And Jesus answered, 'You have no knowledge, either of me or of my Father; had you knowledge of me, you would have knowledge of my Father as well.'

All this Jesus said at the Treasury, while he was teaching in the temple; and no one seized him, because his time had not yet come.

### **Jesus Speaks for His Father**

And he said to them again, 'I am going away, and you will look for me, but you will have to die with your sins upon you; where I am going is where you cannot come.'

At this, the Jews began to ask, 'Will he kill himself? Is that what he means by, "Where I am going is where you cannot come"?''

But he went on to say, 'You belong to earth, I to heaven; you to this world, I to another. That is why I have been telling you that you will die with your sins upon you; you will die with your sins upon you unless you come to believe that it is myself you look for.'

'Who are you, then?' they asked.

Jesus said to them, 'What, that I should be speaking to you at all? There is much I could say of you, many judgments I could pass on you; but what I tell the world is only what I have learned from him who sent me, because he cannot deceive.' And they could not understand that he was calling God his Father.

Then Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will recognize that it is myself you look



the entire world, like the sun. This could not be, unless he was divine. Possession of this 'light which is life' can come only through faith in him. And it is faith in him as their God that is the dominant note of this discussion.

When they demand Jesus' credentials he does not argue with them; he has already given his credentials at the previous paschal feast, when he brought forward four witnesses (p. 156). Here, he is seeking to raise their minds to higher levels: to a belief in his equality with the Father. If he is divine, and is delivering God's message as his right, then they are bound to listen to him; there is no need for him to appeal to others to testify to his truthfulness. But the Jews pretend to think he is speaking of Joseph as his father; they are insincere.

The main intellectual obstacle that Jesus had to overcome in the Jews was their monotheism; God is one. They did not know yet that God is one in nature, but three Persons. So our Lord keeps on emphasizing both his divine nature and his distinction from the Father. If they can understand this, then the seeming contradiction between his claim and their belief will disappear.

In this paragraph the key idea is death. The Jews suggested the theme to him by their misunderstanding of his opening statement about his 'going away.' They had a different opinion when he used the same words during the feast (p. 194); here they thought that he intended to commit suicide, and they knew where such people went; they had no desire to follow him to hell. But he is warning them of the need to make up their minds now, otherwise they will die impenitent; the time of salvation is running out. His death on the cross ('lifted up' is a technical but descriptive word for crucifixion) is the central and essential act of the drama of the Incarnation that is being played before their eyes. When he has accomplished that great atoning act, and returned to his Father in heaven, then the Jews will realize that no other Saviour is to come; that Jesus was the One sent by God, and that faith in him is the only way to the Father.



for, and that I do not do anything on my own authority, but speak as my Father has instructed me to speak. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me all alone, since what I do is always what pleases him.'

While he spoke thus, many of the Jews learned to believe in him.

### **Jews No True Sons of Abraham**

And now Jesus said to those among the Jews who believed in him, 'If you continue faithful to my word, you are my disciples in earnest; so you will come to know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'

They answered him, 'We are of Abraham's breed, nobody ever enslaved us yet; what do you mean by saying, "You shall become free"?''

And Jesus answered them, 'Believe me when I tell you this; everyone who acts sinfully is the slave of sin, and the slave cannot make his home in the house for ever. To make his home in the house for ever, is for the Son. Why then, if it is the Son who makes you free men, you will have freedom in earnest. Yes, I know you are of Abraham's breed; yet you design to kill me, because my word does not find any place in you. My words are what I have learned in the house of my Father, and your actions, it seems, are what you have learned in the school of your father.'

'Our father?' they answered him; 'Abraham is our father.'

Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's true children, it is for you to follow Abraham's example; as it is, you are designing to kill me, who tell you the truth as I have heard it from God; this was not Abraham's way. No, it is your father's example you follow.'

And now they said to him, 'We are no bastard children; God, and he only, is the Father we recognize.'



Our Lord concludes on a note of calm and serenity that even his enemies cannot disturb; how could they, since he is never alone; the Father is always with him. This contrast between the peace and nobility of Jesus and the clamour and animosity of the Pharisees leads quite a number of his hearers to believe the truth of his claims and find faith in him.

These new converts needed strengthening in their faith; they had taken the first step; they must persevere in their adherence to Jesus; their whole life from now on lived in and for him. They were only one section of those listening; their new faith was known only to Jesus, not to the rest of the audience. So, when our Lord speaks to them, the inimical Pharisees reply, not the new converts. It is only with the enemies of Jesus that all the rest of the discussion is concerned.

There is unity of thought throughout this and the next paragraph. There is mounting tension and rage in the Pharisees, as Jesus relentlessly builds up his argument; the climax comes at the end of the next paragraph when Jesus makes his most explicit claim to divinity so far in the gospels, 'Before ever Abraham came to be, I am.' This scene is the turning point in our Lord's ministry at Jerusalem: there has been hesitation and wavering up till this; from now on the issue is clear. The Jews are sinning against the light; they have chosen death instead of life.

The key word to follow throughout the debate is Abraham. It occurs six times in this paragraph, and five times in the next. Most of our Lord's discussions so far have been concerned with Moses, and the Mosaic law (especially the sabbath); here he goes back to a more fundamental issue, Jewish nationalism. This was the real barrier to their acceptance of Christ: they considered that Jewish blood was the only requirement for membership in the Messianic kingdom; in other words, all that mattered was descent from Abraham, the founder of the chosen people.

Our Lord makes a distinction in the Jewish claim of descent



Jesus told them, 'If you were the children of God, you would welcome me gladly; it was from God I took my origin, from him I have come. I did not come on my own errand, it was he who sent me. Why is it that you cannot understand the language I talk? It is because you have no ear for the message I bring. You belong to your father, that is, the devil, and are eager to gratify the appetites which are your father's. He, from the first, was a murderer; and as for truth, he has never taken his stand upon that; there is no truth in him. When he utters falsehood, he is only uttering what is natural to him; he is all false, and it was he who gave falsehood its birth. And if you do not believe me, it is precisely because I am speaking the truth.

'Can any of you convict me of sin? If not, why is it that you do not believe me when I tell you the truth? The man who belongs to God listens to God's words; it is because you do not belong to God that you will not listen to me.'

### **Before Abraham Came to Be, I Am**

Hereupon the Jews answered him, 'We are right, surely, in saying that you are a Samaritan, and are possessed?'

'I am not possessed,' Jesus answered; 'it is because I reverence my Father that you have no reverence for me. Not that I am looking to my own reputation; there is another who will look to it, and be the judge.

'Believe me when I tell you this: if a man is true to my word, to all eternity he will never see death.'

And the Jews said to him, 'Now we are certain that you are possessed. What of Abraham and the prophets? They are dead; and you say that a man will never taste death to all eternity, if he is true to your word. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He is dead, and the prophets are dead. What do you claim to be?'



from Abraham; they are physically his sons, but not spiritually. A son should not only look like his father; he should act like him. After all, it was not for his physical qualities that Abraham was chosen by God; it was for his deep piety and faith. So, it is the soul, not the body, that is important. (St. Paul uses the same reasoning in his Epistle to the Romans, chapter 4.)

The transition from the fatherhood of Abraham to that of God is Jesus' next step. Their determination to kill him makes it clear that their conduct is not derived from imitation of God. What father are they imitating in this? Neither Abraham nor God could be the father of such evil designs; there is only one alternative, the devil. Under the control of sin and Satan, they are spurious children, not only of God, but even of Abraham.

This touches them to the quick; it was precisely their ill will, and refusal to open their minds to the truth, that made them reject Jesus, the Son. There is probably a break in our Lord's discourse, while the Jews shout abuse and accusation of crimes. He replies to this, 'Can any of you convict me of sin?' Anyone can make charges; it is a different matter to prove them.

The adversaries have abandoned all semblance of argument; their rage shows out without any attempt at concealment. Why, Jesus is not even physically descended from Abraham; he is the lowest of all people, a Samaritan. But he knows there is nothing to be gained in arguing this point; he passes over it. They are spiritually dead, but he will make another effort: solemnly he again offers them life, if they will believe in him.

This is the turning point of the debate; at last the Jews think they have him cornered. Their materialistic minds see a reference to physical death only; but Jesus is speaking of supernatural life. They thought that he was related to God in the same way as they were, as a human descendant of Abraham. He would now tell them that he was greater even than Abraham; even he had to die because he was mortal. Jesus is eternal; he existed before Abra-



‘If I should speak in my own honour,’ Jesus answered, ‘such honour goes for nothing. Honour must come to me from my Father, from him whom you claim as your God: although you cannot recognize him. But I have knowledge of him; if I should say I have not, I should be what you are, a liar. Yes, I have knowledge of him, and I am true to his word. As for your father Abraham, his heart was proud to see the day of my coming; he saw, and rejoiced to see it.’

Then the Jews asked him, ‘Have you seen Abraham, you, who are not yet fifty years old?’

And Jesus said to them, ‘Believe me, before ever Abraham came to be, I am.’

Whereupon they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

### **Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind**

And Jesus saw, as he passed on his way, a man who had been blind from his birth. Whereupon his disciples asked him, ‘Master, was this man guilty of sin, or was it his parents, that he should have been born blind?’

‘Neither he nor his parents were guilty,’ Jesus answered; ‘it was so that God’s action might declare itself in him. While daylight lasts, we must work in the service of him who sent me; the night is coming, when there is no working any more. As long as I am in the world, I am the world’s light.’

With that, he spat on the ground, and made clay with the spittle; then he spread the clay on the man’s eyes, and said to him, ‘Away with you, and wash in the pool of Siloam’ (a word which means, ‘Sent out’). So he went and washed there, and came back with his sight restored.

And now the neighbours, and those who had been accustomed to see him begging, began to say, ‘Is not this the man who used to sit here and beg?’



ham was born. (At the Dedication feast he will make a still more explicit claim to equality with the Father, p. 246.)

When our Lord said that Abraham saw the day of his coming, he probably was referring not to a recent vision granted that patriarch in the abode of the dead, but to the promise made to Abraham while still living about 2,000 B.C., that all nations of the earth would be blessed through one of his descendants, the Messias. The Jews' reference, 'you are not yet fifty years old,' is not an indication of Jesus' age (actually he was thirty-two), but simply suggested by the comparison with Abraham; he was so far back that one had to count in centuries; and here was Jesus not even living a half-century ago.

Stoning was the common Jewish punishment for serious crimes, such as blasphemy. There were plenty of stones to hand in the temple, then in the course of reconstruction.

#### **Pool of Siloam October 29 A.D.**

It was probably on the sabbath following the Abraham-argument that Jesus' attention was drawn by the appeal for alms by a beggar, sitting at the Beautiful Gate of the temple (Acts 3, 2). The apostles, who had been silent and lost in all the deep discussions with the Pharisees, have regained their old familiar way with the Master. It is quite likely that they did not know at this time that the beggar had been born blind. So their question is twofold: Was his blindness a punishment for some personal sin? Or were his parents being punished for their sinfulness before he was born? They knew he could not have sinned before birth.

The Book of Job had clearly shown that suffering may be inflicted on the innocent, but the apostles had probably not given much thought to the subject, and were only voicing the common opinion of their day. They probably recalled how Jesus himself, here in Jerusalem six months before, had warned a cripple that worse would happen to him if he sinned again (p. 152).

No personal sins were responsible for his blindness (our Lord makes no mention of original sin, the cause of all suffering); he



Some said, 'This is the man.'

And others, 'No, but he looks like him.'

And he told them, 'Yes, I am the man.'

'How is it, then,' they asked him, 'that your eyes have been opened?'

He answered, 'A man called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes with it, and said to me, "Away with you to the pool of Siloam and wash there." So I went there, and washed, and recovered my sight.'

'Where is he?' they asked.

And he said, 'I cannot tell.'

### **The Pharisees Question the Blind Man**

And they brought him before the Pharisees, this man who had once been blind. It was a sabbath day, you must know, when Jesus made clay and opened his eyes. And so the Pharisees in their turn asked him how he had recovered his sight.

'Why,' he said, 'he put clay on my eyes; and then I washed, and now I can see.'

Whereupon some of the Pharisees said, 'This man can be no messenger from God; he does not observe the sabbath.'

Others asked, 'How can a man do miracles like this, and be a sinner?' Thus there was a division of opinion among them.

And now they questioned the blind man again, 'What account do you give of him, that he should thus have opened your eyes?'

'Why,' he said, 'he must be a prophet.'

The Jews must send for the parents of the man who had recovered his sight, before they would believe his story that he had been blind, and that he had had his sight restored to him. And they questioned them, 'Is this your son, who, you say, was born blind? How comes it, then, that he is now able to see?'



was to fit into God's plan as a demonstration of how all blindness can be cured only by him who is the light of the world. He represents the spiritual blindness of the Jews; they can find the light of life only through faith in Jesus.

This strange procedure of Jesus in working the cure was meant as a test of the man's faith, the usual condition of his favours. There was also a deeper meaning to it: the blind man would receive his sight only if he washed in water that bore the name of him who had been 'sent' by the Father (a play on the name 'Siloam'). This could be nothing else but a figure of Baptism (p. 48), which gives a new power of seeing by the light of faith.

### The Temple October 29 A.D.

The blind man returned first to his own home; there the news of his cure soon spread. His identity was established, but the explanation of his cure puzzled the neighbours; so they decided to get the opinion of the Pharisees, their spiritual guides in all their problems. The people were not denouncing him as an impostor; they were merely looking for an explanation. At first the Pharisees adopted the same line of argument as in the case of the cripple of the pool; Jesus was a violator of the sabbath. But in the light of his claims at the recent feast of Tabernacles, this was dangerous ground; once accept the fact of the cure, and the conclusion was obvious: Jesus must be all he claimed to be.

So they decided to deny the fact itself. At this point of the narrative, St. John calls them 'the Jews,' his ordinary name for the sworn enemies of Jesus; they are the same Pharisees to whom the blind man was brought first. This man was still under the spell of his recent experience; he held doggedly to his story; he was a partisan of Jesus, and so they could get no satisfaction from him. Then they hit upon the plan of summoning his parents; these simple folk could be embarrassed by adroit questioning, and intimidated through their reverence for their leaders.

But the parents saw at once that the question was loaded; they knew that the Pharisees' hatred of Jesus was the reason for this interest in their son; so they refused to compromise themselves.



His parents answered them, 'We can tell you that this is our son, and that he was blind when he was born; we cannot tell how he is able to see now; we have no means of knowing who opened his eyes for him. Ask the man himself; he is of age; let him tell you his own story.' It was fear of the Jews that made his parents talk in this way; the Jews had by now come to an agreement that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ should be forbidden the synagogue; that was why his parents said, 'He is of age, ask him himself.'

### **The Testimony of the Man Born Blind**

So once more they summoned the man who had been blind. 'Give God the praise,' they said; 'this man, to our knowledge, is a sinner.'

'Sinner or not,' said the other, 'I cannot tell; all I know is that once I was blind, and now I can see.'

Then they asked him over again, 'What was it he did to you? By what means did he open your eyes?'

And he answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen to me. Why must you hear it over again? Would you too become his disciples?'

Upon this, they covered him with abuse; 'Keep his discipleship for yourself, we are disciples of Moses. We know for certain that God spoke to Moses, we know nothing of this man, or whence he comes.'

'Why,' the man answered, 'here is matter for astonishment; here is a man that comes you cannot tell whence, and he has opened my eyes. And yet we know for certain that God does not answer the prayers of sinners, it is only when a man is devout and does his will, that his prayer is answered. That a man should open the eyes of one born blind is something unheard of since the world began. No, if this man did not come from God, he would have no powers at all.'



They testify to the identity of their son, and the fact of his blindness from birth; they shy clear of any discussion on the manner of his cure. Even though an admission that Jesus had wrought the miracle would not necessarily mean to confess him as the Messiah, the parents can see that the evilly-intentioned Pharisees might easily read that into any statement made.

'Forbidden the synagogue' was the Jewish form of excommunication (see 1 Cor. 5, 2). It had been resorted to during the recent arguments at the feast of Tabernacles, to frighten the common people from adherence to Jesus.

Baffled by the parents' refusal to give evidence, the Pharisees call the son back into their headquarters in the temple. The parents showed signs of fear and awe in their presence; maybe the son would give way under pressure. With great solemnity they command him to speak the truth ('Give God the praise' is a Hebrew form of adjuration); they, the learned men in Israel, have examined the case; all they need is his agreement to their finding, and they will let the matter drop. Surely he will not dare question the decision of the court! (Neither side mentions Jesus by name during the whole of this incident.)

But they have underestimated this blind beggar's courage. He will not be trapped by theological distinctions; he stands firm on the objectivity of the fact of his cure. When they question him again to try and get him to contradict some details of his former recital, he becomes annoyed and ironical. Instead of answering questions, he attacks his questioners. They react to his taunt with insult: he can have Jesus, they follow Moses. The point of bringing Moses in, is the sabbath law which Jesus has broken by healing the blind man; to follow Jesus is to be in opposition to Moses, who gave this law.

Emboldened by the effect of his irony on the Pharisees, he launches into a long speech; the Jewish leaders are so taken aback at his audacity that they listen open-mouthed. At least one point



‘What,’ they answered, ‘are we to have lessons from you, all steeped in sin from your birth?’

And they cast him out from their presence.

### **The Blind Man Finds Faith**

When Jesus heard that they had so cast him out, he went to find him, and asked him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’

‘Tell me who he is, Lord,’ he answered, ‘so that I can believe in him.’

‘He is one whom you have seen,’ Jesus told him. ‘It is he who is speaking to you.’

Then he said, ‘I do believe, Lord,’ and fell down to worship him.

Hereupon Jesus said, ‘I have come into this world so that a sentence may fall upon it, that those who are blind should see, and those who see should become blind.’

Some of the Pharisees heard this, such as were in his company, and they asked, ‘Are we blind too?’

‘If you were blind,’ Jesus told them, ‘you would not be guilty. It is because you protest, “We can see clearly,” that you cannot be rid of your guilt.’

### **Jesus the Door of the Sheepfold**

‘Believe me when I tell you this; the man who climbs into the sheepfold by some other way, instead of entering by the door, comes to steal and to plunder: it is the shepherd who tends the sheep that comes in by the door. At his coming the keeper of the door throws it open, and the sheep are attentive to his voice; and so he calls by name the sheep which belong to him, and leads them out with him. When he has brought out all the sheep which belong to him, he walks in front of them, and the sheep follow him, recognizing his voice. If a stranger comes, they run away from him instead of following him; they cannot recognize the voice of a stranger.’ This was



on which both sides are in agreement is the indisputable fact, obvious throughout the scriptures, that God will pardon a sinner, but work wonders only through a saint.

Our Lord would not let such a courageous defence go unrewarded. He sought him out, like the cripple (p. 152), and revealed his Messianic dignity, as he had to the Samaritan (p. 58). It was from the voice that he recognized Jesus; but now, in the light of faith, he believes and worships Jesus both as his Saviour and his God ('worship' is always used by St. John in its strict sense).

The Pharisees present were not the malevolent group of the previous interview; rather that element in the party who were wavering between adherence to Jesus and their leaders. Jesus contrasts these proud and learned men with the humble and simple man; he has found the light of faith, while they remain spiritually blind. All through the gospels it is the same story: the sinners, publicans, poor and outcast have come to Jesus; they have felt the need of redemption. But the pride of the Pharisees has kept them blinded. They think they have no need of instruction or correction; they will not admit their sinfulness. How can their sins be forgiven if they deny there are any to forgive?

### **Bethany November 29 A.D.**

It was probably at Bethany, looking down over the desert of Judea, that Jesus told this parable to his disciples, and some of the people of Jerusalem. Judea is a land of shepherds; so our Lord speaks their language, whereas in Galilee he spoke of crops and fishing. It was spoken soon after the healing of the blind man, who had been cast out of the fold of Israel; there is an obvious contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus in their care of the flocks entrusted to each of them.

In the description Jesus begins with a scene at night, the sheep of different shepherds safe in the sheepfold. Then, in the morning, each shepherd comes to the sheepfold to take out his individual flock to pasturage for the day. These two scenes are



a parable which Jesus told them; and they could not understand what he meant to say to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again; 'Believe me,' he said, 'it is I who am the door of the sheepfold. Those others who have found their way in are all thieves and robbers; to these, the sheep paid no attention. I am the door; a man will find salvation if he makes his way in through me; he will come and go at will, and find pasture. The thief only comes to steal, to slaughter, to destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.'

### **Jesus Is the Good Shepherd**

'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, whereas the hireling, who is no shepherd, and does not claim the sheep as his own, abandons the sheep and takes to flight as soon as he sees the wolf coming, and so the wolf harries the sheep and scatters them. The hireling, then, takes to flight because he is only a hireling, because he has no concern over the sheep. I am the good shepherd; my sheep are known to me and know me; just as I am known to my Father, and know him. And for these sheep I am laying down my life. I have other sheep too, which do not belong to this fold; I must lead them also to pasture; they will listen to my voice; so there will be one flock, and one shepherd. This my Father loves in me, that I am laying down my life, to take it up again afterwards. Nobody can rob me of it; I lay it down of my own accord. I am free to lay it down, free to take it up again; that is the charge which my Father has given me.'

These words of his led to a fresh division of opinion among the Jews. Many of them said, 'He must be possessed; he is a madman; why do you listen to him?'

While others said, 'This is not the language of a man who is possessed by a devil. Has a devil power to open blind men's eyes?'



developed by our Lord into two distinct parables. The first is concerned with the sheepfold, the second with the flock. Many shepherds put their flocks into the one sheepfold for the night, and set a guard at the door. The sheepfold represents Christ's kingdom; entry can be had only through him; he is the door of approach to God. In his first parable there is question only of the test of a true shepherd; one who has the right of entry to the sheepfold. Jesus' disciples are the only true shepherds; the Pharisees, and the many Messianic claimants in the past, present, and future, have no right in the kingdom; only those authorized by Christ are true teachers.

In the last sentence of the previous paragraph, Jesus made the transition to this second parable; he is now the shepherd, no longer the door. He is now concerned with the flock, not with the sheepfold; it is a scene by day, the night has passed. Only once in this paragraph is 'fold' used, and that only to make reference to the call of the Gentiles (the Jews are 'this fold,' the Gentiles the rest of his sheep scattered abroad).

The image of a shepherd looking after his sheep is familiar in the Old Testament. The best examples are Psalm 22, where the Lord is the shepherd, and Ezechiel 34, which has the same theme as the present parable. Of all our Lord's thirty parables, this one has had the greatest appeal to his followers.

Jesus outlines the duties of a good shepherd, rather than his rights; he himself is the model shepherd. It is devotion to his flock that is emphasized; there is a loving, affectionate, personal relationship between the shepherd and his sheep; a Christian is related to Christ, as he is to the Father.

During the previous encounters with the Pharisees at Jerusalem, it might seem that Jesus was doing all in his power to escape death. Here, he corrects that idea; he is going to sacrifice himself as a victim for his flock, but freely. He is not forced to it by the designs of the Pharisees; he is laying down his life of his own free will, in obedience to the command of his Father. He will die, and rise again, to bring life to men.



### The Conditions of Discipleship

As they went on their journey, one of the scribes said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you are going.'

But Jesus told him, 'Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their resting-places; the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

To another he said, 'Follow me.'

And he answered, 'Lord, give me leave to go home and bury my father first.'

But Jesus said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; it is for you to go out and proclaim God's kingdom.'

And there was yet another who said, 'Lord, I will follow you, but first let me take leave of my friends.'

To him Jesus said, 'No one who looks behind him, when he has once put his hand to the plough, is fitted for the kingdom of God.'

### The Mission of the Seventy-Two

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them before him, two and two, into all the cities and villages he himself was to visit. 'The harvest,' he told them, 'is plentiful enough, but the labourers are few; you must ask the Lord to whom the harvest belongs to send labourers out for the harvesting. Go then, and remember, I am sending you out to be like lambs among wolves. You are not to carry purse, or wallet, or shoes; you are to give no one greeting on your way. When you enter a house, say first of all, "Peace be to this house"; and if those who dwell there are men of good will, your good wishes shall come down upon it; if not, they will come back to you the way they went. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they have to give you; the labourer has a right to his maintenance; do not move from one house to another. When you enter a city, and they make you welcome, be content to eat the fare they offer



**Judea November-December 29 A.D.**

Three examples of the conditions of discipleship are grouped here by St. Luke, in preparation for the mission about to start. The first was on the road, the second and third in some village of Judea. An early tradition identifies the second (probably the only one of the three to become a disciple) with Philip the deacon, who seems to have come from Caesarea (Acts 21, 8).

To the first enthusiast Jesus explains the hardship of a homeless existence: he has been rejected in Galilee, Samaria, and Jerusalem. The second asks for a short delay to bury his father who has just died; to him Jesus emphasizes the precedence of the gospel preaching over all family ties. 'The dead' are those who have not the privilege of membership in the kingdom (a spiritual sense); 'their dead' is used in the ordinary meaning of physical death. To the third, Jesus speaks of the need of keeping to the work to be done, avoiding the distractions of the world; he must give himself totally to the kingdom (Phil. 3, 13).

Bethany is probably the headquarters from which our Lord sends his disciples. Just as he used his twelve apostles eight months earlier to preach the gospel in Galilee, now he sends a greater number (some Greek MSS have 70, others 72; the number is uncertain), because of the larger territory to be covered, and the shortness of time left to him. It was his plan that all the chosen people should hear his message of salvation; Galilee, the territory of Philip, and the Decapolis have been evangelized; he now sends these disciples into Judea and Perea. He will visit this territory in the next five months (November—March).

His advice to them is similar to that given to the twelve (p. 132): poverty and detachment from worldly goods, relying on divine Providence; meekness ('lambs') their only weapon against their opponents, the scribes and Pharisees ('wolves'). The question of their lodging, and contact with the inhabitants of the places they are to visit, is treated in more detail here than in the mission of the twelve. They are warned not to waste time in



you: and heal those who are sick there; and tell them, "The kingdom of God is close upon you." But if you enter a city where they will not make you welcome, go out into their streets, and say, "We brush off in your faces the very dust from your city that has clung to our feet; and be sure of this, the kingdom of God is close at hand." I tell you, it shall go less hard with Sodom at the day of judgment, than with that city. He who gives you welcome, gives me welcome too; and he who gives me welcome, gives welcome to him that sent me. He who listens to you, listens to me; he who despises you, despises me; and he who despises me, despises him that sent me.'

### **The Return of the Seventy-Two**

And the seventy-two disciples came back full of rejoicing; 'Lord,' they said, 'even the devils are made subject to us through your name.'

He said to them, 'I watched, while Satan was cast down like a lightning flash from heaven. Behold, I have given you the right to trample on snakes and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy, and take no hurt from it. But you, instead of rejoicing that the devils are made subject to you, should be rejoicing that your names are enrolled in heaven.'

At this time, Jesus was filled with gladness by the Holy Spirit, and said, 'O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I give you praise that you have hidden all this from the wise and the prudent, and revealed it to little children. Be it so, Lord, since this finds favour in your sight. My Father has entrusted everything into my hands; none knows the Son truly except the Father, and none knows the Father truly except the Son, and those to whom it is the Son's good pleasure to reveal him.

'Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened; I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon yourselves, and



long oriental exchanges of greeting along the road; they are men engaged in spreading the good news of the kingdom, and so must not be distracted from that essential work. Likewise they are not to move from one house to another; precious time would be lost in the exchange of farewells, and establishing new contacts. A distinction is made here between entering a house and a city. The first deals with individual accommodation, the second with their public preaching. The gospel message is concerned not only with the conversion of individuals; it has a mission to reform the social and public life of the community.

In Jesus' threat of final punishment on those who cast out his heralds, there is clearly shown the close union between Father, Son, and disciples. To reject them is to reject God.

### **Bethany November 29 A.D.**

The disciples came back to our Lord at Bethany after a few weeks; his words are addressed to them as a group, though they did not all return together in a body. They were jubilant and enthusiastic, especially about their power over devils, as something amazing and unexpected (this power had not been expressly given them; only power to heal the sick). Jesus' reply shows how it was his plan to act through his appointed ministers to bring his redemptive death to men, and to dethrone Satan from the power he had assumed since the fall of man. Looking into the future, he guarantees his disciples that no peril or danger can harm them ('snakes and scorpions' are typical dangers in Palestine. See Psalm 90, 13); but escape from peril and domination over demons count for nothing, if their names are not written in the book of life.

One would have expected the scribes and Pharisees ('the wise'), and the Sadducees and Herodians ('the prudent'), who were the established leaders of the people, to join the Messiah in founding his kingdom. Instead of helping, they bitterly opposed him. All his disciples were from the unlearned and despised masses ('little children'). Such a complete reversal of human standards of success was the divine plan for the foundation of the kingdom, now taking its first steps in the mission of the seventy-two (this is what



learn from me; I am gentle and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Then, turning to his own disciples, when they were alone, he said, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see; I tell you, there have been many prophets and kings and just men who have longed to see what you see, and never saw it, to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'

### **Parable of the Good Samaritan**

It happened once that a lawyer rose up trying to put him to the test; 'Master,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'

Jesus asked him, 'What is it that is written in the law? What is your reading of it?'

And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with the love of your whole heart, and your whole soul, and your whole strength, and your whole mind; and your neighbour as yourself.'

'You have answered right,' he told him; 'do this, and you shall find life.'

But he, to prove himself blameless, asked, 'And who is my neighbour?'

Jesus gave him his answer; 'A man who was on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho fell in with robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. And a priest, who chanced to be going down by the same road, saw him there and passed by on the other side. And a Levite who came there saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, who was on his travels, saw him and took pity at the sight; he went up to him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine into them, and so mounted him upon his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he took care of him. And next day he took out two silver pieces, which he gave to the inn-keeper, and said, "Take care of him, and on my



the saints of the Old Testament, 'prophets, kings and just men,' longed to see). Jesus knows that it will succeed, because he himself is God, and possesses divine knowledge equally with the Father; all the future is present to him.

Unlike the Pharisees, aloof and proud of their learning, Jesus wants all men to trust and love him; he will teach them (the crowds have now gathered round him) his way of life; it is not galling like the harsh Pharisaical observances.

It was probably in the synagogue at Bethany, overlooking the brigand country through which the Jerusalem-Jericho road twisted, that a learned, and rather saintly Pharisee asked these questions. But our Lord had not come to answer questions; his purpose was to raise men's minds and change their lives. The Pharisee expected him to define and distinguish, just as any learned rabbi would; instead he told him a story.

The basic error in the questioner was his belief that race was the essential factor in 'neighbour' (which means near); he would restrict the virtue of charity to fellow-Jews. Jesus tells him that need must prevail over race. This is easily seen by putting oneself in the other fellow's shoes: would you worry about a man's race, if you were lying half-dead by the roadside? Any man, even a hated Samaritan, is your neighbour; so you must be his. Our Lord emphasizes 'do'; charity must be practical. It is not a virtue to discuss; it must be shown by actions.

But there is more to the parable than this; our Lord does more than answer a lawyer's question. He tells us not only whom to love, but why and how: we should love all men, because he himself has first loved us, and his love is to be the measure of ours. He has given us a motive for loving: he himself is the Good Samaritan. Mankind is the man lying by the roadside, stripped of sanctifying grace and wounded in his natural faculties by original sin. The sacrifices of the old law ('priest, levite,' not scribes and Pharisees) were powerless to help him. God himself, whom man had made an enemy ('Samaritan') by sin, came down



way home I will give you whatever else is owing to you for your pains.”

‘Which of these, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who had fallen in with robbers?’

And he said, ‘He that showed mercy on him.’

Then Jesus said, ‘Go your way, and do you likewise.’

### **Martha Rebuked, Mary Praised**

In one of the villages he entered during his journey, a woman called Martha entertained him in her house. She had a sister called Mary; and Mary took her place at the Lord’s feet, and listened to his words. Martha was distracted by waiting on many needs; so she came to his side, and asked, ‘Lord, are you content that my sister should leave me to do the serving alone? Come, bid her help me.’

Jesus answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, how many cares and troubles you have! But there is still need of one thing; and Mary has chosen for herself the best part of all, that which shall never be taken away from her.’

### **The Our Father**

Once, when he had found a place to pray in, one of his disciples said to him, after his prayer was over, ‘Lord, teach us how to pray, as John did for his disciples.’

And he told them, ‘When you are at prayer, do not use many phrases, like the heathens, who think to make themselves heard by their eloquence. You are not to be like them; your heavenly Father knows well what your needs are before you ask him.

‘This, then, is to be your prayer, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”’



on earth ('on his travels') as the divine Physician ('oil and wine'); he himself took man into his own personal care, and brought him to his church ('inn'), there to provide the refreshment of the sacraments, and nurse him back to health. He has amply provided for his vicar, Peter ('innkeeper'), with the inexhaustible treasures of his own merits. Nothing will be lacking there.

This scene completes the parable of the Good Samaritan. There is more to Christianity than practical charity; it is being, as well as doing; the practice of charity must not distract one from union of mind and will with Jesus.

Our Lord arrives unexpectedly; but he is always at home in this house at Bethany. He is seated in the sunny courtyard; some of his apostles are there too. Martha is so distracted by her concern for the meal being prepared, that she has only half an ear for our Lord's words; this it is that is lacking in her entertainment of Jesus, and which Mary so perfectly provides. When God speaks, one should give undivided attention to him: 'many prophets and kings and just men have longed to hear what you hear' (p. 220).

### Mount Olivet November 29 A.D.

The traditional place for the Our Father is the mount of Olives, above the garden of Gethsemani; this gives special point to his words there on Holy Thursday night. 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' Our Lord had often prayed; this time his absorption in God made his disciples envious. The Jews had a prayer, called the Eighteen Benedictions, to be said twice a day. Our Lord's prayer is based on that to some extent, but freed from all nationalistic Jewish ideals; it is a universal prayer for all men; all the time it is 'us,' not 'me.' There is a strong sense of the unity and solidarity of mankind throughout; it is unity that Jesus prays for after the Last Supper (p. 368).

It is made up of two groups of three petitions; the first three concern our relations with God, and all are qualified by the closing phrase, 'on earth as it is in heaven.' The second three



‘Your heavenly Father will forgive you your transgressions, if you forgive your fellow-men theirs; if you do not forgive them, your heavenly Father will not forgive your transgressions either.

### **Perseverance in Prayer**

‘Let us suppose that one of you has a friend, to whom he goes at dead of night, and asks him, “Lend me three loaves of bread, neighbour; a friend of mine has turned in to me after a journey, and I have nothing to offer him.”

‘And suppose the other answers, from within doors, “Do not put me to such trouble; the door is locked, my children and I are in bed; I cannot bestir myself to grant your request.”

‘I tell you, even if he will not bestir himself to grant it out of friendship, shameless asking will make him rise and give his friend all that he needs. And I say the same to you; ask, and the gift will come, seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened to you. Everyone that asks, will receive, that seeks, will find, that knocks, will have the door opened to him. Among yourselves, if a father is asked by his son for bread, will he give him a stone? Or for a fish, will he give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he is asked for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? Why then, if you, evil as you are, know well enough how to give your children what is good for them, is not your Father much more ready to give, from heaven, the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?’

### **The Dispute About Beelzebub**

Then they brought to him a man possessed, who was both blind and dumb; whom he cured, giving him both speech and sight. The crowds were filled with amazement; ‘Nothing like this,’ they said, ‘was ever seen in Israel; can this be no other than the Son of David?’

But the scribes and Pharisees who had come down from



concern our relations with each other. In Jesus' language (Aramaic), it has both rhythm and rhyme. Here are the first three petitions: 'Abunan debishmayya, yitkaddash shemak—T'ete malkutak, tehe sibyonak—Ilekma debishmayya lekden beara.'

In the Our Father, our Lord taught his disciples how to pray, and what they were to ask for. He now shows them what a powerful weapon prayer must be in their lives: they must storm heaven by insistent asking. They must not be discouraged by a first refusal; God does not want men that are apathetic, who give up when difficulties arise. All the treasures of heaven are waiting for them, if only they have faith and perseverance (p. 270).

These two illustrations are closely linked with the Our Father by the father-theme dominant in both; a secondary link is the word bread. There is both a comparison and a contrast between the ordinary human situation described in the two parables, and its application to the supernatural. Our Lord takes the happenings of life on earth, so familiar to his hearers, and through them raises their minds to God in heaven. But all human relations are only a shadowy resemblance of that divine life which he possesses with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The first parable is based on the primitive sleeping arrangements of those times; a straw mat on the floor, with a communal blanket; any movement would disturb all the sleepers. The point of the second parable is the similarity of appearance between the real and the spurious article. 'Fish' is a reminder that Jesus is talking to Galilean apostles from the lakeside.

### **Bethlehem November 29 A.D.**

The only indication of place for this clash with the Pharisees, is the mention of 'the desert' in the next paragraph. Our Lord had moved away from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, but was still in sight of the desert of Judea; either Bethlehem or Hebron would suit this circumstance admirably.

Beelzebub is mentioned in 4 Kings 1, as a false god of the



Jerusalem said, when they heard it, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul; it is through the prince of the devils that he casts the devils out.'

Whereupon Jesus, who knew what was in their thoughts, called them to him, and said to them, 'How can it be Satan, who casts Satan out? Why, if a kingdom is at war with itself, that kingdom cannot stand firm, and if a household is at war with itself, that household cannot stand firm; if Satan, then, has risen up in arms against Satan, he is at war with himself; he cannot stand firm; his end has come. Again, if it is through Beelzebul that I cast out devils, by what means do your own sons cast them out? It is for these, then, to pronounce judgment on you. But if, when I cast out devils, I do it through the Spirit of God, then it must be that the kingdom of God has already appeared among you. How is anyone to gain entrance into the house of a strong man and plunder his goods without first making the strong man his prisoner? Then he can plunder his house at will. He who is not with me, is against me; he who does not gather his store with me, scatters it abroad.

### **The Sin Against the Holy Ghost**

'And now I tell you this; there is pardon for all the other sins and blasphemies of men, but not for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. There is no one who blasphemes against the Son of Man but may find forgiveness; but for him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit there is no forgiveness, either in this world or in the world to come; he is guilty of a sin which is eternal.' (This was because they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.')

"The unclean spirit, which has possessed a man and then goes out of him, walks about the desert looking for a resting-place, and finds none; and it says, "I will go back to my own dwelling from which I came out." And it



Philistines ('Baal' means lord, and 'zebub' flies). In Aramaic the name means the enemy, or the accuser, which is also the meaning of Satan, the devil. So it came to be used as a contemptuous nickname for Satan. The Jews made it more insulting still by changing 'zebub' to 'zebul,' which means dung.

At the feast of Tabernacles the Jews had accused our Lord of being possessed (p. 204); but that was in the heat of argument. Here it is done coldly, and with malice, just after he has done a work of mercy. Such a vicious and subtle charge must not go unchallenged; the common people could be easily influenced, and led away from the truth. Our Lord's argument is based on examples from common sense: internal strife leads inevitably to ruin; it is ridiculous to suggest that Satan is fighting against himself. Not only Jesus' own exorcisms, but the mission of the seventy-two have shown that the devil was conquered by Jesus (for Jewish exorcisms see Acts 19, 13); the 'strong man' (Satan) has been completely dispossessed.

There can be no neutrality in this war; there are only two kingdoms, God's and Satan's. The Pharisees are either with Jesus or against him, in the camp of their father (p. 202), with whom there can be nothing but division and discord.

The crowds in Galilee and the leaders in Jerusalem rejected our Lord, but for entirely different reasons. The humble circumstances of Jesus did not fit in with the Galileans' picture of a glorious, majestic Messiah; it was his humanity ('the Son of Man') that proved the stumbling block. But the Jerusalemites saw clearly his divine power; by refusing to submit their wills, they were in open enmity with God. The Jews did not understand that the Holy Spirit was the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity; to them it meant a divine quality, such as his power (in casting out demons), or his love and mercy in forgiving sin (Psalm 50, 13). But they were directly rejecting the source of pardon. God's love, the Holy Spirit, who makes men holy. Men of such



comes back to find that dwelling empty, and swept out, and neatly set in order. Thereupon, it goes away, and brings in seven other spirits more wicked than itself to bear it company, and together they enter in and settle down there; so that the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it fare with this wicked generation.'

When he spoke thus, a woman in the crowd said to him aloud, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, the breast which you have sucked.'

And he answered, 'Shall we not say, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it"?''

### **The Sign of Jonas**

Some of the scribes and Pharisees, to put him to the test, would have him show a sign out of heaven. The crowds gathered round him, and he began speaking to them thus: 'The generation that asks for a sign is a wicked and unfaithful generation; the only sign that will be given it is the sign of the prophet Jonas. Jonas was the sign given to the men of Nineve; the sign given to this generation will be the Son of Man. Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea-beast, and the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineve will rise up with this generation at the judgment, and will leave it without excuse; for they did penance when Jonas preached to them, and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment, and will leave them without excuse; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.'

### **An Illustration from a Lamp**

'Nobody lights a lamp, and then puts it away in a cellar or under a bushel measure; it is put on the lamp-



disposition are not likely to repent; that is why their sin is 'eternal.'

Our Lord warns the Jews, by means of a parable, that Satan is an enemy who never gives in; he has been cast out of Israel ('man, dwelling') by Jesus' power and forced into Gentile lands ('desert'); but, like a house-hunter, he will come back with reinforcements ('seven other spirits'), unless Jesus occupies the house.

A woman in the crowd is moved to admiration at his courage and calm in the face of such opposition; she would be honoured to have such a son. But Jesus raises her thoughts higher still: obedience and faith are more important than ties of blood (p. 106). Maybe these words were spoken at Bethlehem.

A crowd had been gathering during the latter part of our Lord's argument with the Pharisees; the woman who called out expressed the sentiments of most of the audience. The more hostile party of the Pharisees had been silenced; then the less rabid element among them began to question him; they wanted some spectacular miracle such as Samuel (1 Kings 12, 16-18) or Elias (3 Kings 18) worked, just as had the Pharisees at Magdala, four months earlier (p. 164). He had refused to give a sign then; his attitude has not changed. There should be no need of any more than he has given already; his own life of dedication to their welfare, his sublime teaching day after day, is sign enough of his divine mission, to those who are rightly disposed.

Jonas and Solomon worked no miracles; their mission had produced fruit because those who heard them were of good will. At the day of judgment, a heathen people (Ninevites) and a heathen queen (from Sheba, 3 Kings 10) will put Israel to shame.

But a mighty miracle will be worked that will eclipse all their signs: Jesus' resurrection (p. 46), referred to in the cryptic language of Jonas' spectacular adventure.

By means of an illustration from a lamp, our Lord shows the Pharisees why a sign will be of no value to them. They wanted



stand, so that its light may be seen by all who come in. Your body has the eye for its lamp; and if your eye is clear, the whole of your body will be lit up; whereas if your eye is diseased, the whole of your body will be in darkness. And if the light which you have in you is itself darkness, what of your darkness? How deep will that be! Take good care, then, that this principle of light which is in you is light, not darkness; then, if your whole body is in the light, with no part of it in darkness, it will all be lit up as if by a bright lamp enlightening you.'

### **Scribes and Pharisees Rebuked**

At the time when he said this, one of the Pharisees invited him to his house for the midday meal; so he went in and sat down at table; the Pharisee meanwhile was inwardly surmising, why he had not washed before his meal. And the Lord said to him, 'You Pharisees are content to cleanse the outward part of cup and dish, while all within is running with avarice and wickedness. Fools, did not he who made the outward part make the inward too? Nay, you should give alms out of the store you have, and at once all that is yours becomes clean.'

'Woe upon you, you Pharisees, that will award God his tithe, though it be of mint or rue or whatever herb you will, and leave on one side justice and the love of God; you do ill to forget one duty while you perform the other. Woe upon you, you Pharisees, for loving the first seats in the synagogues, and to have your hands kissed in the market-place; woe upon you, that are like hidden tombs which men walk over without knowing it.'

And here one of the lawyers answered him; 'Master,' he said, 'in speaking thus you are bringing us too into contempt.'

And he said, 'Woe upon you, too, you lawyers, for loading men with packs too heavy to be borne, packs that you yourselves will not touch with one finger. Woe upon



something to look at, something as striking and obvious as a neon light. What they really need is something to look with; they need glasses; their trouble is their eyesight. The light is there, shining bright (it is Jesus himself), but they cannot see it, any more than a man with diseased eyesight can see the sunlight. If they are sincere, and anxious to find the truth, all they have to do is to perfect their spiritual sight by honesty of purpose and holiness of life. The imagery is somewhat complicated by the use of 'lamp' for an external light (Christ) and an interior light (the spiritual outlook of the Pharisees).

On four occasions in the gospels, our Lord accepted an invitation to dine at the house of a Pharisee. Two of them have been recorded already, one at Magdala (pp. 102-104), the other at Capharnaum (pp. 158-160); this one was in Judea (possibly Bethlehem), and the fourth in Perea (p. 252). The main meal was eaten at evening (translated 'supper' by Knox; the midday meal is translated 'dinner'; see p. 252). Breakfast was such a scanty repast that it did not figure as a meal at all.

This invitation need not have been made the same day as the preceding dispute with the Pharisees; it was a friendly gesture on the part of this Pharisee, who disassociates himself from both the Beelzebul element and the 'sign out of heaven' group. But they are all Pharisees; an organized body that is the great obstacle to the establishment of God's kingdom; right from their first appearance (p. 30), they are shown to be enemies. When they took offense at Jesus' omission of the ablutions (pp. 158-160), he pointed out the cause of their blindness: their concern with keeping exactly every minute rule and regulation blinded them to the fundamental spiritual principle, charity (p. 85).

St. Luke here records six 'woes' (a sorrowful warning of disaster to come), three against the Pharisees and three against the lawyers. St. Matthew gives the same words of our Lord on Tuesday in Holy Week with more detail. Although our Lord repeated



you, for building up the tombs of the prophets, the same prophets who were murdered by your fathers; sure witness that you approve what your fathers did, since you build tombs for the men they murdered. Woe upon you, you lawyers, for taking away with you the key of knowledge; you have neither entered yourselves, nor let others enter when they would.'

After he left the house, the scribes and Pharisees resolved to hunt him down mercilessly and to browbeat him with a multitude of questions. Thus they lay in wait for him, hoping to catch some word from his lips.

### **Advice to Disciples for the Future**

And now the people gathered in thousands round him, so that they trod one another down; and he addressed himself first to his disciples; 'Have nothing to do with the leaven of the Pharisees,' he said, 'it is all hypocrisy. What is veiled will all be revealed, what is hidden will all be known; what I have said to you under cover of darkness, you are to utter in the light of day; what has been whispered in your ears in secret chambers, you are to proclaim on the housetops. A disciple is no better than his master, a servant than his lord; enough that the disciple should fare like his master, the servant like his lord; he will be fully perfect if he is as his master is. If they have cried Beelzebul at the Master of the house, they will do it much more readily to the men of his household. And I say this to you who are my friends, do not be afraid of those who can kill the body, and after that can do no more. I will tell you who it is you must fear; fear him who has power not only to kill but to cast a man into hell; him you must fear indeed. Are not sparrows sold two for a penny? And yet it is impossible for one of them to fall to the ground without your heavenly Father's will. And as for you, he takes



many of his sayings in different circumstances, it is hardly likely that he would break out into such condemnation at the table of his host. So St. Luke is probably summarizing what our Lord said at different times during the ministry in Judea; the meal at this house was where the disagreement first started. (For treatment in detail of these woes, see pp. 320-324.)

Usually scribes and Pharisees are grouped without distinction. Actually, scribes ('lawyers') were the leaders of the Pharisee Party; they were the learned men in the study and teaching of the Torah. Their name indicates their profession, whereas Pharisee and Sadducee is a division based on religious principles. Some of the scribes belonged to the Sadducee Party.

The news of how the Rabbi from Galilee had worsted the Pharisees in argument, and then told them plainly what he thought of them, soon spread through the towns and villages that Jesus was visiting. Though the people went in awe and reverence of their accepted teachers, they were conscious of the 'packs too heavy to be borne' which were loaded on to them by these men; as in Galilee (p. 80), they reacted quickly to the charm and friendliness of Jesus; the burden of his teaching was light on them.

The sight of such crowds gathering about him turns his thoughts to the future, when his disciples will go out and win the whole world to his cause. So, when the opportunity offers, he takes his disciples aside, and gives them advice and encouragement for their future work. The recent conflict with the Pharisees is prominent in his mind during all this instruction.

The disciples were Jews; they had their early training from the Pharisees. Our Lord warns them not to imitate these men (he gave a similar warning on the lake, p. 166); their teaching ('leaven') is nothing but hypocrisy, because they teach only what suits themselves, not the truth. It might seem that our Lord too was adopting this technique in his veiled language of parables (p. 112); but present circumstances demand care and caution in instructing them apart from the crowd ('cover of darkness . . .



every hair of your head into his reckoning. Do not be afraid, then; you count for more than a host of sparrows. And I tell you this; whoever acknowledges me before men, I too will acknowledge him before my Father who is in heaven; and whoever disowns me before men, before my Father in heaven I too will disown him. When they bring you to trial before synagogues, and magistrates, and officers, do not consider anxiously what you are to say, what defence to make or how to make it; the Holy Spirit will instruct you when the time comes, what words to use. Resolve, then, not to prepare your manner of answering beforehand; I will give you such eloquence and such wisdom as all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand, or to confute.'

### **Parable of the Rich Fool**

One of the crowd said to him, 'Master, bid my brother give me a share of our inheritance.'

And he answered, 'Why, man, who has appointed me a judge to make awards between you?'

Then he said to them, 'Look well and keep yourselves clear of all covetousness. A man's life does not consist in having more possessions than he needs.'

And he told them a parable, 'There was a rich man whose lands yielded a heavy crop: and he debated in his mind, "What am I to do, with no room to store my crops in?"'

"Then he said, "This is what I will do; I will pull down my barns, and build greater ones, and there I shall be able to store all my harvest and all the goods that are mine; and then I will say to my soul, Come, soul, you have goods in plenty laid up for many years to come; take your rest now, eat, drink, and make merry."

'And God said, "You fool, this night you must render up your soul; and who will be master now of all you have laid by?"'



whispered in your ears'); it will be different when they themselves go out among the Gentiles. 'To proclaim on the housetops' means, Let the whole world know: preach publicly. The imagery is taken from the flat roofs of a Palestine town, where the people spent much time; a whole town could listen to a single man on the housetops, but not in the narrow, winding streets. (Come out of the catacombs onto the balcony of St. Peter's, gives the idea.)

Just as Jesus was persecuted, so the disciples will receive the same opposition; but God alone has power to deprive them of eternal life. Our Lord gives them three motives for confidence; God the Father will look after them with paternal care; God the Son is with them, because it is his cause they are proclaiming; God the Holy Ghost will be their advocate, when they come up before skilful and cunning adversaries.

#### Plain of Sharon December 29 A.D.

From this parable, and the instruction to the apostles in the following paragraph, it would seem that our Lord has moved to the coastal plain of Sharon; a place like Nicopolis, Lydda, or Arimathea, where agriculture would make men rich, rather than the shepherd life of the hill country.

Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus is always easy to approach. This man brings his problem as he would to a learned rabbi; but our Lord has come to bring supernatural life to men, not to settle secular problems; there are existing institutions competent to deal with such matters (he adopted a similar attitude on other occasions; see pp. 198, 314). He has just been speaking to his apostles on the danger of death, and the real life of the soul; not physical life in the body, but eternal life with God. This is a vital matter for the crowds too; so he adapts his teaching to them by means of a story (see p. 220).

There is no injustice, no misuse of wealth; he simply has placed his whole life in material things, instead of in God (with little export trade, goods were commonly stored up on the farm). He knows he has a soul (note emphasis in the parable); but he lives as though he were but a vegetable, or an animal. A sudden death



‘Thus it is with the man who lays up treasure for himself, and has no credit with God.’

### Trust in Divine Providence

Then he said to his disciples, ‘I say to you, then, do not fret over your life, how to support it with food and drink; over your body, how to keep it clothed. Is not life itself a greater gift than food, the body than clothing? See how the birds of the air never sow, or reap, or gather grain into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them; have you not an excellence beyond theirs? Can any of you, for all his anxiety, add a single span to the length of his life? And if you are powerless to do so small a thing, why do you fret about your other needs?

‘And why should you be anxious over clothing? See how the wild lilies grow; they do not toil or spin; and yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God, then, so clothes the grasses of the field, which today live and will feed the oven tomorrow, will he not be much more ready to clothe you, men of little faith? Do not fret, then, asking, “What are we to eat? or What are we to drink? or How shall we find clothing?” It is for the heathen to busy themselves over such things; you have a Father in heaven who knows that you need them all. Make it your first care to find the kingdom of God, and his approval, and all these things shall be yours without the asking. Do not fret, then, over tomorrow; leave tomorrow to fret over its own needs; for today, today’s troubles are enough.

‘Do not be afraid, you, my little flock. Your Father has determined to give you his kingdom. Do not lay up treasure for yourselves on earth, where there is moth and rust to consume it, where there are thieves to break in and steal it; lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven, where there is no moth or rust to consume it, no thieves



will leave his spiritual soul a beggar, without a penny of credit in the sight of God, who alone matters.

The disciples, as well as the crowds, have been listening to our Lord's parable of the rich fool. When they are alone again, he resumes his instruction to his disciples on their future mission; but now his teaching takes a new turn: he applies the parable just narrated, to his disciples. In contrast to riches he sets poverty; his disciples are to rely on divine Providence (the same counsel that he gave when he sent out the twelve, p. 132, and the seventy-two, p. 216). The sudden death of the rich fool is the basis of his counsel on watchfulness (see next paragraph). The 'single span' (a short time; a span is the measure of a hand's breadth) is a reference to the sudden death of the rich fool; likewise the contrast between soul and body, between heaven and earth, the references to barns and treasure, show a close link with the parable. That is why it fits better here than in the Sermon on the Mount, where St. Matthew puts it. Even the 'wild lilies' are topical on the plain of Sharon; though it is not springtime, the November rains cause plants to grow and flower in the temperate climate of Palestine's west coast.

Our Lord did not go about with his eyes piously fixed on the ground: he admired the beauties of nature. And here he offers a commentary on the first beatitude (p. 86), from a study of birds and flowers. They are to be detached from worldly cares (food and clothing are basic needs), in order to seek God; they must have confidence in God, and abandon themselves to his care, because he is their Father (not the birds' Father, but 'your Father'). They have still to work, and earn their daily bread; but they are not to be worried about it, or distracted by it from the essential: the kingdom, which is life with God. The point of comparison between the lilies and Solomon is probably in the colour of royal robes; 'lilies' are scarlet anemones.

It is with special affection that the Good Shepherd calls his



to break in and steal. Sell what you have, and give alms, so providing yourselves with a purse that time cannot wear holes in, an inexhaustible treasure laid up in heaven, where no thief comes near, no moth consumes. Where your treasure-house is, there your heart is too.

### **Be Ready for the Master's Return**

'Your loins must be girt, and your lamps burning, and you yourselves like men awaiting their master's return from a wedding feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks at the door. Blessed are those servants, whom their master will find watching when he comes; I promise you, he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and minister to them. Whether he comes late at night or early in the morning, blessed are those servants if he finds them alert. Be sure of this; if the master of the house had known at what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch, and not allowed his house to be broken open. You too, then, must stand ready; the Son of Man will come at an hour when you are not expecting him.'

Hereupon Peter said to him, 'Lord, do you address this parable to us, or to all men?'

And the Lord answered, 'Who, then, is a faithful and wise steward, one whom his master will entrust with the care of the household, to give them their allowance of food at the appointed time? Blessed is that servant who is found doing this when his lord comes; I promise you, he will give him charge of all his goods. But if that servant says in his heart, "My lord is long in coming," and falls to beating the men and the maids, eating and drinking himself drunk; then on some day when he expects nothing, at an hour when he is all unaware, his lord will come, and will cut him off, and assign him his portion with the unfaithful; where there will be weeping, and



disciples 'my little flock'; it is their fear and timidity in the face of danger that he is visualizing; they are going out 'like lambs among wolves.' It is not enough that they be free from useless cares and worries; their minds and hearts must be raised above this earth and fixed on heaven.

The mention of heaven is the transition to the second element of the parable of the rich fool—the thought of death. It is cast in the form of another parable: the need to be ready and watching for the master to return. Our Lord here pictures himself after his Ascension into heaven; he will come back to call each individual soul to its particular judgment at the hour of death. It is a sobering thought, in contrast to the carefree considerations of birds and flowers.

There is some similarity to the parable of the Ten Virgins (p. 334)—a wedding feast, the lamps burning; but here it is the master who knocks at the door. 'Loins girt' refers to the long alb-like garment which was tucked into the belt when the wearer was walking or working; it is a sign of preparedness. The mention of 'the thief' changes the parable to another situation; it emphasizes the unexpectedness of death. (This image figured prominently in early Christian teaching, 1 Thess. 5, 2; 2 Peter 3, 10.)

This is the only time Peter is mentioned in the Judean ministry: he gets only one mention in the Perean ministry (p. 276). Altogether in the gospels he figures in twenty-four scenes; twelve of them in Galilee and ten in Jerusalem. Not that he didn't speak up many other times; they are not recorded because the gospel plan is based on Galilee and Jerusalem as the two centres of our Lord's teaching. What prompted him to ask this question was the parable just spoken; ordinarily it was Jesus' way of speech with the crowds, not with the apostles (p. 118). But there was no crowd present this time. Did our Lord mean his words to be applied to them just the same, or to his apostles only?

Jesus does not say yes or no; he continues the parable, changing



gnashing of teeth. Yet it is the servant who knew his Lord's will, and did not make ready for him, or do his will, that will have many strokes of the lash; he who did not know of it, yet earned a beating, will have only a few. Much will be asked of the man to whom much has been given; more will be expected of him, because he was entrusted with more.

### **To Spread Fire Over the Earth**

'It is fire that I have come to spread over the earth, and what better wish can I have than that it should be kindled? There is a baptism I must needs be baptized with, and how impatient am I for its accomplishment! Do you think that I have come to bring peace on the earth? No, believe me, I have come to bring a sword, not peace. Henceforward five in the same house will be found at variance, three against two and two against three; the father will be at variance with his son, and the son with his father, the mother against her daughter, and the daughter against her mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies will be the people of his own house.'

### **Interpreting the Signs of the Times**

And he said to the crowds, 'When you find a cloud rising out of the west, you say at once, "There is rain coming," and so it does; when you find the south-east wind blowing, you say, "It will be hot," and so it is. Poor fools, you know well enough how to interpret the face of land and sky; can you not interpret the times you live in? Does not your own experience teach you to make the right decision? If one has a claim against you, and you are going with him to the magistrate, then do your utmost, while you are still on the road, to be quit of his claim; or it may be he will drag you into



the subject from plural to singular: one servant, the steward in charge of the household. Jesus, the perfect Teacher, is making Peter think it out for himself; he gives the parable a personal turn, directed at Peter, as though to say, 'Never mind about others; keep an eye on yourself.' Though in truth the parable is applicable to all in authority: they will have more to answer for than those who were not given the same opportunities and responsibilities.

These first sentences could have been spoken by our Lord in the garden of Gethsemani; they are a cry of anguish from the depths of his soul. The fire of divine love (for imagery see the Descent of the Holy Ghost, p. 430) cannot be kindled in men's hearts without the baptism of his passion, those swirling waters that must first engulf him (the torrents caused by the rains provide the imagery). It is a glimpse into the inner life of Christ, a perpetual Gethsemani. The hatred and enmity around him makes him impatient to establish the reign of charity.

But his kingdom will not be an earthly paradise; it is a demand on each individual for total renunciation of self to his cause. If accepted it will bring peace and friendship with God; but the free will of evil men will resist Christ's teaching (p. 20); this will cause division ('the sword') even in families.

### Nicopolis December 29 A.D.

Our Lord has explained to his disciples the need of being prepared for the time when God will call each soul at death; he now adapts his teaching to the crowds through two simple illustrations. The first is from weather forecasts: rain always blows in from the Mediterranean Sea, the burning sirocco wind from the Sinai Desert (he gave different signs in Galilee, p. 166). He has given them sufficient evidence of his divine mission; they should draw the conclusion from that, and show consistency in their adherence to him, instead of being enthusiastic one day and abandoning him the next. There can be no salvation for them outside the kingdom; the time of grace and pardon is fast



the presence of the judge, and the judge will hand you over to his officer, and the officer will cast you into prison. Be sure of this, you will find no discharge from it until you have paid the last farthing.'

### **Repent While There is Time**

At this very time there were some that came and told him the story of those Galileans, whose blood Pilate had shed in the midst of their sacrifices.

And Jesus said in answer, 'Do you suppose, because this befell them, that these men were worse sinners than all else in Galilee? I tell you it is not so; you will all perish as they did, if you do not repent. What of those eighteen men on whom the tower fell in Siloam, and killed them; do you suppose that there was a heavier account against them, than against any others who then dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you it was not so; you will all perish as they did, if you do not repent.'

And this was a parable he told them: "There was a man that had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, but when he came and looked for fruit on it, he could find none; whereupon he said to his vine-dresser, "See now, I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree for three years, and cannot find any. Cut it down; why should it be a useless charge upon the land?"

'But he answered thus, "Sir, let it stand this year too, so that I may have time to dig and put dung round it; perhaps it will bear fruit; if not, it will be time to cut it down then."'

### **The Crippled Woman**

There was a sabbath day on which he was preaching in one of their synagogues. Here there was a woman who for eighteen years had suffered under some influence that disabled her; she was bent down, and could not lift her head straight.



running out; the time of divine chastisement can be averted only by repentance here and now. They must put themselves right with God by imitating a debtor who will make every attempt to settle with his creditor before prison sentence is passed on him.

### Emmaus December 29 A.D.

Our Lord was not far from Jerusalem at this time (a town such as Emmaus would suit the situation); a friendly deputation came to tell him of the latest Roman brutality. It concerned him, since he was a Galilean (possibly some of those slain were his own kinsmen, who were determined on a public Messianic manifestation, p. 190). It is quite likely that this incident caused the falling-out of Pilate and Herod Antipas (p. 390); it is even possible that Barabbas was the leader of this revolt, and that the two thieves crucified with our Lord were members of the League of Freedom movement that staged the demonstration.

Our Lord also recalls another recent, well known incident of sudden death. The Jewish explanation of such things was that God picks out sinners and punishes them with some such calamity; his justice is then completely satisfied; the rest of the people can breathe freely once more. That is a false conclusion: let every man think of his own repentance; the whole nation is guilty, and so the whole nation must repent. This is clear from the parable of the fig-tree, which stands for Israel (p. 306), God's favoured but barren plantation. ('Three years' is not the age of the tree, but the long period of unproductiveness after reaching maturity, which takes four to five years.) Jesus pleads for one more chance for Israel; he will do his utmost, in the short time left, to make it produce fruit for God.

And this is how they reacted to Jesus' appeal to repent; it shows how merited was his condemnation of the Pharisees for their spiritual blindness and hardness of heart. Instead of seeing the hand of God in the miracle, and the great favour done by Jesus to a suffering member of their community, their narrow,



Jesus saw her and called her to him; 'Woman,' he said, 'you are rid of your infirmity.' Then he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was raised upright, and gave praise to God.

But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus should heal them on the sabbath day, turned and said to the crowd, 'You have six days on which work is allowed; you should come and be healed on those days, not on the sabbath.'

And the Lord gave him this answer, 'What, you hypocrites, is there any one of you that will not untie his ox or his ass from the stall and take them down to water, when it is the sabbath? And here is this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had kept bound these eighteen years past; was it wrong that she should be delivered on the sabbath day from bonds like these?'

All his adversaries were put to shame by this saying of his, and all the people rejoiced over the marvellous works he did.

### **The Dedication Feast**

And so he went through the cities and villages teaching, and making his journey towards Jerusalem. And now the Dedication feast was taking place at Jerusalem, and it was winter; and Jesus was walking about in the temple, in Solomon's Porch.

So the Jews gathered round him, and said to him, 'How long will you go on keeping us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us openly.'

Jesus answered them, 'I have told you, but you will not believe me. All that I do in my Father's name bears me testimony, and still you will not believe me; that is because you are no sheep of mine. My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life, so that to all eternity they can



rigid minds saw only a violation of one of their invented thirty-nine works, forbidden on the sabbath (pp. 78-80). Was not this woman an apt symbol of the Jewish nation, bowed down under the deforming influence of the Pharisaical observances? Jesus could free all Abraham's children from their bonds, and Satan's dominion, just as easily as he did this woman. This is our Lord's last appearance in a synagogue; the 'vine-dresser' giving his final attention to the spiritually sterile 'fig-tree.'

From a comparison with demoniacs in the gospels, it does not seem that this woman was physically possessed by the devil (pp. 122, 174); the reference to Satan's bonds could be used by our Lord in the general sense that physical sufferings are the result of sin, which Satan originated; in this way Job's sores are said to be inflicted by Satan (Job 2, 7). It was probably the imposition of hands that the rulers of the synagogue objected to as a violation of the sabbath; that is why our Lord makes reference to untying animals (the hands would have to be used for this); there is a further comparison between the bonds by which they were tied and the bonds of the bowed-down woman.

### Jerusalem December 29 A.D.

This feast was not one of the three original festivals dating from the time of the Exodus (Leviticus 23); it was established only in 165 B.C. when the Machabees won back and re-dedicated the temple, profaned by the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Mac. 4, 36-59). It was not obligatory to attend the festival at Jerusalem. Because of the cold, our Lord walked in the covered porches as he taught his disciples and those who gathered about him. Now that Jesus was acclaimed publicly throughout Judea, the Jewish leaders thought the time opportune to have a definite statement from his own mouth; they wanted something actionable that they could bring up in their own Council, and present to the Roman governor if need be.

Our Lord had never spoken of himself as 'the Christ' (Messias), except when alone with his disciples (p. 168; compare p. 58; it



never be lost; no one can tear them away from my hand. This trust which my Father has committed to me is more precious than all else; no one can tear them away from the hand of my Father. My Father and I are one.'

At this, the Jews once again took up stones, to stone him with.

Jesus answered them, 'My Father has enabled me to do many deeds of mercy in your presence; for which of these are you stoning me?'

'It is not for any deed of mercy we are stoning you,' answered the Jews; 'it is for blasphemy; it is because you, who are a man, pretend to be God.'

Jesus answered them, 'Is it not written in your law, "I have said, You are gods"? He gave the title of gods to those who had God's message sent to them; and we know that the words of scripture have binding force. Why then, what of him whom God has sanctified and sent into the world? Will you call me a blasphemer, because I have told you I am the Son of God? If you find that I do not act like the son of my Father, then put no trust in me; but if I do, then let my actions convince you where I cannot; so you will recognize and understand that the Father is in me, and I in him.'

Thereupon once again they had a mind to seize him; but he escaped from their hands, and went back to the other side of Jordan, to the place where John was when he first baptized. There he waited, while many came out to see him, and he healed them there; and once more he began to teach them, as his custom was.

'John,' they said, 'never did a miracle, but all John told us about this man has proved true.'

And many found faith in him there.



was a jealously guarded secret, because of the false political meaning given to the Messianic kingdom by the Jews (p. 29). The same conditions still exist; so our Lord makes the same appeal to the evidence that he has already presented (pp. 154-156). If they are really sincere in their request, all they have to do is to understand the parable of the Good Shepherd that he had presented to them only two months before (pp. 212-214). His flock is composed of believers, not the unfaithful Jews; through faith and obedience to him, they inherit eternal life, not political independence. This is the true kingdom, the church (p. 168), the great 'trust' committed to him by the Father; it is as precious to the Father as it is to himself; he should know, because they both possess the one divine nature.

A violent, turbulent, oriental outburst of fury greets his words. As they rush out into the open Gentiles' Court in search of stones, he begins to talk again; his calmness and composure compel them to listen. It is an appeal to reason, to think calmly; he wants them to believe in him, the Good Shepherd still searching for the lost sheep. He does not withdraw his claim; he states it from a new angle. The Jews were thinking in terms of the incommunicable majesty of Yahweh; no one could usurp that, or even share it with him. Our Lord turns their minds to the scriptures, which are a valid source of information since God himself is their Author. God there (Psalm 81, 6) gives his name to human beings who share to some extent in his powers (they were magistrates); evidently he does not regard this as a usurpation. So, if the Lord himself permitted such a title to men who represented him by their office, surely One specially commissioned ('sanctified and sent'), and possessing the divine power as a natural right, could really be the Son of God. It is no empty claim nor mere matter of words; his whole life has been evidence of the intimate union of Father and Son in the work of redemption.



## Chapter 9: The Perean Ministry



THERE were two villages called Bethany; one on the mount of Olives, Jesus' headquarters for the Judean ministry (chapter 8), the other on the east bank of the Jordan, his headquarters for the Perean ministry (chapter 9). This second Bethany was the place where John the Baptist had begun his preaching, two years earlier (p. 40). It was winter then; and now it is winter again. The Jordan valley was a popular resort at this time of year, owing to its mild climate (p. 31). It was also the main line of communication between the Jewish provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Judea; by using the Jordan corridor they could by-pass hostile Samaria (pp. 47, 191).

Perea (Greek for Transjordan) was part of Herod Antipas' territory. In actual practice the name included the western side of the valley, which technically belonged to Judea and Samaria. Since most of the Jewish population was settled in the valley, our Lord probably kept to that region, and did not journey into the eastern hills that bordered the Decapolis. As in the Judean ministry there are few indications of time and place. I have tried to give some semblance of sequence by a proposed journey up the east bank, and down the west bank of the river; it is mostly conjecture.

The Jordan is the only river in Palestine (p. 31). The Yarmuk, Jabbok, and Arnon are mere creeks; they can be forded anywhere; the Kedron, and all other so-called streams, are dry gullies, and carry only rain water. There was only one bridge over Jordan; it was north of the lake of Galilee, and used only twice by our Lord (pp. 162, 176). He probably crossed by the ford south of Bethany and the ferry near the Yarmuk during the Perean ministry travels. There were several other fords, one at the Jabbok, another at Scythopolis, and a third where the Jordan runs into the lake (p. 138).

Our Lord's teaching on riches is a prominent theme in this chapter; there was wealth in the Jordan valley itself, and it was in close contact with the riches of hellenistic Decapolis. But his parables are its most striking feature; almost half of them (thirteen out of thirty, p. 109) are given here. They deal with the individual, rather than the kingdom itself (pp. 110-118).



**Jews Excluded, Gentiles Admitted**

There was a man that said to him, 'Lord, is it only a few that are to be saved?'

Whereupon he said to them: 'Fight your way in at the narrow door; I tell you, there are many who will try and will not be able to enter, once the master of the house has risen and has shut the door. You will fall to beating on the door as you stand outside, and saying, "Lord, open to us."

'But this will be his answer, "I know nothing of you, nor whence you come."

'Thereupon you will fall to protesting, "Master, Master, was it not in your name we prophesied? Was it not in your name that we performed many miracles? We have eaten and drunk in your presence; you have taught in our streets."

'But he will say, "I tell you, I know nothing of you, nor whence you come; you were never friends of mine; depart from me, you that traffic in wrong-doing."

'Weeping shall be there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets within God's kingdom, while you yourselves are cast into the darkness outside. Others will come from the east and the west, the north and the south, to take their ease in the kingdom of God. And indeed, there are some who are last, and shall then be first, some who are first, and shall then be last.'

**Herod's Threat against Jesus**

It was on that day that some of the Pharisees came to him and said, 'Go elsewhere, and leave this place; Herod has a mind to kill you.'

And he said to them, 'Go and tell that fox, "Behold, today and tomorrow I am to continue casting out devils, and doing works of healing; it is on the third day that



**Bethany Beyond Jordan January 30 A.D.**

Our Lord continued his same urgent warning to repent, here at Bethany beyond Jordan, as in his recent teaching in Judea. His emphasis on the divine chastisement about to come upon the Jews led one of his audience to conclude that he favoured the opinion that only a small percentage, the elite of Israel, would be saved. There was no question of the Gentiles at all; the Jews rather looked forward to seeing all of them receive the punishment they deserved, when the Lord came to judge.

They pictured the life of the blessed, in the world to come, as a banquet; the Lord himself the Master of that divine palace, in which they would feast in the company of their illustrious ancestors. It is a scene at night, the banquet-hall brightly lighted (light is also the familiar scriptural imagery for the divine presence); outside is darkness and despair ('gnashing of teeth' in fury, like wild animals; others would translate 'chattering of teeth,' indicating the terror of the damned, rather than fury).

Our Lord here clearly claims to be the divine judge; he identifies himself with the Master in the parable, who certainly is God. He corrects two false beliefs of his questioner: (1) The privilege of being of the same race as the Messiah, of close association with him during his mortal life, even of working with him (let Judas note this), are not sufficient qualities for admission; salvation is a matter of personal effort and holiness (87, 97). (2) The Gentiles will take their (the Jews') place; these late-comers ('last') will dispossess those who were first in point of time. St. Paul gives the reason (Romans 2, 17-29).

The Pharisees were not concerned for Jesus' safety; they were gnashing their teeth at him after the parable just told. Herod was probably in residence at nearby Machaerus, where he had killed John; he preferred to scare Jesus away from his territory, rather than repeat that tragedy (p. 134). His nature was cunning, not violent. The Pharisees were in agreement with his



I am to reach my consummation. But today and tomorrow and the next day I must go on my journeys; there is no room for a prophet to meet his death, except at Jerusalem.” ’

### **A Man Cured of the Dropsy**

There was a sabbath day on which he was asked to take a meal with one of the chief Pharisees, and as he went into the house, they were watching him. Here his eye was met by the sight of a man who had the dropsy.

Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees openly, ‘Is healing allowed on the sabbath day?’ Then, as they did not answer, he took the man by the hand, and sent him away healed.

And he turned on them, and said, ‘Is there any one of you who will not pull out his ass or his ox immediately, if it falls into a pit on the sabbath?’ To this they could make no answer.

He also had a parable for the guests who were invited, as he observed how they chose the chief places for themselves; he said to them: ‘When any man invites you to a wedding, do not sit down in the chief place; he may have invited some guest whose rank is greater than yours. If so, his host and yours will come and say to you, “Make room for this man”; and so you will find yourself taking, with a blush, the lowest place of all. Rather, when you are summoned, go straight to the lowest place and sit down there; so, when he who invited you comes in, he will say, “My friend, go higher than this”; and then honour shall be yours before all that sit down in your company. Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.’

He said, moreover, to his host, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your neighbours to come, or your brethren, or your kindred, or your friends who are rich;



toy scheme. 'The thought of death sends our Lord's thoughts flying to Jerusalem, the city that has a prescriptive right to the murder of God's messengers (p. 124). But God, not flinched by the Pharisees, has determined that day of atonement; it is still three months off.

The sabbath was a popular day with the Jews for feasting, although the food was always cold, owing to the prohibition against cooking on the sabbath. This must have been a midday meal, since the question of healing was introduced (the sabbath ended at sunset).

Dropsy is a swelling caused by a watery fluid (Greek *hydrops*) in the body tissues. The story runs like that of a previous cure at Capernaum (p. 78); only here there is not the same hostility, nor is this a plot to trap Jesus. The point of our Lord's reply is the concern of his listeners with their own affairs ('his eye, his ox'), and their indifference to the needs of strangers (the dropsical man). True charity makes no such distinctions.

The guests are more interested in getting a good seat at table than in understanding Jesus' rebuke. So he continues to try and raise their minds to God, taking the present circumstances as the material for a parable. Here he is more benign than with the Judean Pharisees (p. 230); he does not make the parable too pointed by drawing attention to their present conduct. He considers a more formal gathering, a banquet, on the occasion of a wedding; there the etiquette is stricter than at a family meal. It is a picture of the Messianic kingdom (p. 250), it is God that invites the guests, and humility pleases him, it is an essential quality for entry into his kingdom. A man is not to act in this way to secure a higher place; he should appreciate humility as a virtue that puts one high in God's estimation (p. 270).

Although our Lord addresses his words of advice on hospitality to his host, they are meant for all. It was their self interest that prompted him to give the illustration from the eye and ox, and the lesson on humility. He now teaches an even more important virtue; self interest must give way to charity; this is pleasing to



it may be they will send you invitations in return, and so you will be recompensed for your pains. Rather, when you give hospitality, invite poor men to come, the cripples, the lame, the blind; so you shall win a blessing, for these cannot make you any return; your reward will come when the just rise again.'

### **Parable of the Great Supper**

Hearing this, one of his fellow guests said to him, 'Blessed is the man who shall feast in the kingdom of God.'

He answered him thus, "There was a man that gave a great supper, and sent out many invitations. And when the time came for his supper, he sent one of his own servants telling the invited guests to come, for all was now ready.

'And all of them, with one accord, began making excuses. "I have bought a farm," the first said to him, "and I must needs go and look over it; I pray you, count me excused."

'And another said, "I have bought five pair of oxen, and I am on my way to make trial of them; I pray you, count me excused."

'And another said, "I have married a wife, and so I am unable to come."

"The servant came back and told his master all this, whereupon the host fell into a rage, and said to his servant, "Quick, go out into the streets and lanes of the city; bring in the poor, the cripples, the blind and the lame."

'And when the servant told him, "Sir, all has been done according to your command, but there is room left still," the master said to the servant, "Go out into the highways and the hedgerows, and give them no choice but to come in, that so my house may be filled. I tell you, none of those who were first invited shall taste of my supper."'



God, who will amply reward them (pp. 92-94). Hospitality is a sacred duty in the East, and there are always plenty of poor and afflicted about the houses of the rich (p. 264). Instead of describing the happiness and rejoicing of the poor at such acts of charity, our Lord teaches that it is the rich who are really privileged; later, he will give a deeper reason (p. 340).

Our Lord had succeeded in his purpose of raising their minds from material things to his kingdom. His last words, 'when the just rise again,' had turned the thoughts of at least one of his listeners to the resurrection of the dead, which to the Jews meant the first stage of the establishment of the kingdom (p. 316). But his attitude, like that of another Pharisee a few days earlier (p. 250), needed correcting. Of course he, and all the others at table too, would be members of the kingdom. Not for a moment did he think that he might not find his place in it; after all, it was meant for him. By another parable, our Lord shows that the Pharisees are in danger of losing the kingdom entirely, through their selfish personal interests and their contemptuous reception of God's own ambassador, now in their midst and calling them to repentance. If they do not repent, they, the leaders, will be left outside, while the common, uneducated masses will enter (p. 102).

This parable is given in another form later (p. 312); there the reprobation of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles, is clearly indicated. Here, too, though secondary, the Jews are portrayed in those who were invited (by God's choice of them in the Old Testament), but refused to accept the call of Christ; the Gentiles are indicated by those from 'the highways and the hedgerows.'

The phrase 'with one accord' does not mean that the invited guests were in collusion; they all had the same kind of excuse: interest in themselves, not in God. The third excuse is specifically given in the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 24, 5).



### Counting the Cost

Great crowds bore him company on his way; to these he turned, and said: 'If any man comes to me, without hating his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yes, and his own life too, he can be no disciple of mine. A man cannot be my disciple unless he takes up his own cross, and follows after me. Consider, if one of you has a mind to build a tower, does he not first sit down and count the cost that must be paid, if he is to have enough to finish it? Is he to lay the foundation, and then find himself unable to complete the work, so that all who see it will fall to mocking him and saying, "Here is a man who began to build, and could not finish his building"?'

'Or if a king is setting out to join battle with another king, does he not first sit down and deliberate, whether with his army of ten thousand he can meet the onset of one who has twenty thousand? If he cannot, then, while the other is still at a distance, he despatches envoys to ask for conditions of peace. And so it is with you; none of you can be my disciple if he does not take leave of all that he possesses.'

### The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

When they found all the publicans and sinners coming to listen to him, the Pharisees and scribes were indignant; 'Here is a man,' they said, 'that entertains sinners, and eats with them.'

Whereupon he told them this parable: 'If any of you owns a hundred sheep, and has lost one of them, does he not leave the other ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders, rejoicing, and so goes home, and calls his friends and his neighbours together; "Rejoice with me," he says to them, "I have found my sheep that was lost." So it is, I tell you, in



**River Jordan February 30 A.D.**

Great crowds followed our Lord as he moved north, up the eastern bank of the Jordan; they were as enthusiastic as the crowds earlier in Galilee (p. 66). But he would not encourage them with false hopes of ease and victory; his kingdom demanded hardship and suffering (p. 86). Like the Levites (Deuteronomy 10, 9-10), they must be prepared to sacrifice the closest family ties, and to stand firm by him when some crisis or persecution comes; they must sacrifice their lives rather than lose Jesus (p. 170). Our Lord's thoughts are surely on his passion and death, the end of the road that will eventually terminate at Jerusalem. It is because he knows how fickle and inconstant are those who pretend to be true followers that he warns them to think well and consider what it means to be a follower of his (see three examples, p. 216).

The two parables are meant to make them weigh the consequences of discipleship (p. 96). Both of them are topical: Herod Antipas' fortress ('a tower') at Machaerus and the war that threatened to break out there at any time (p. 137) served as the basic materials. In both parables it is obvious that money would solve the difficult situations; most of the audience would think of this solution. So our Lord cuts short any thought on such lines; poverty alone is currency in his kingdom, not riches.

**River Jabbok February 30 A.D.**

Our Lord could be hard and unrelenting in the demands he made on members of his kingdom, and then easy and indulgent in his conduct with them. This paradox annoyed the rigorous Pharisees here, as in Galilee (p. 74); such interest in outcasts was most unbecoming to a rabbi. So, our Lord explains his attitude by three parables; the first two are a pair, like the Mustard Seed and the Leaven (p. 116); one for men, the other for women.

Jesus was most fitted to explain God's interest in sinful men; he himself was God incarnate; he knew God's infinite care and anxiety for their salvation. In these parables he gives us an in-



heaven; there will be more rejoicing over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine souls that are justified, and have no need of repentance.

‘Or if some woman has ten silver pieces by her, and has lost one of them, does she not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls her friends and her neighbours together; “Rejoice with me,” she says, “I have found the silver piece which I lost.” So it is, I tell you, with the angels of God; there is joy among them over one sinner that repents.’

### **Parable of the Prodigal Son**

Then he said, “There was a certain man who had two sons. And the younger of these said to his father, “Father, give me that portion of the estate which falls to me.” So he divided his property between them. Not many days afterwards, the younger son put together all that he had, and went on his travels to a far country, where he wasted his fortune in riotous living. Then, when all was spent, a great famine arose in that country, and he found himself in want; whereupon he went and attached himself to a citizen of that country, who put him on his farm, to herd swine. He would have been glad to fill his belly with husks, such as the swine used to eat; but none was ready to give them to him. Then he came to himself, and said, “How many hired servants there are in my father’s house, who have more bread than they can eat, and here am I perishing with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you; I am not worthy, now, to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.’ ”

‘And he arose, and went on his way to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and took pity on him; running up, he threw his arms round



sight into the very mind of God, and what goes on in heaven itself. The Jews were aware of the mercy of God; but a mercy for the nation rather than the individual. Our Lord emphasizes God's interest in each soul, and brings in two new ideas of the mercy of God: his searching and his rejoicing.

In winter time grass was scarce, so shepherds took their flocks into desert regions; one could easily get lost wandering in strange country. Shepherds usually carried lambs only; it was a sign of tender care. Other shepherds were asked about the missing sheep, hence the gathering was quite natural. The piece of silver was probably part of the wife's dowry, sewn into her head-dress, her most prized possession. With no windows, a lamp would be needed; her activity aroused neighbourly curiosity.

Since Adam's fall, sinful man went in fear and dread of God; the relationship was that of creature and Creator. The Almighty dwelt far above men, remote and inaccessible, a just and exacting Ruler, punishing sinners and rewarding the good. The rigorism of the Pharisees, and their insistence on exact observance of the law, emphasized this attitude. Our Lord came to reveal God as he really is; this he did both by his life and teaching.

In the two preceding parables he showed how God searches for the sinner, and rejoices when he finds him. Now in this, the most elaborate and finest of all his parables, he shows God's affectionate love for men; all human love, so warm and tender, is only a faint reflection of God's deep, personal love for the individual soul; the most accurate title for God, is Father (see the prayer Jesus taught his apostles, p. 222).

The second scene (there are three, one for each character) carries the theme of the parable, the mercy of God; it is the link with the two preceding parables. But there is a progression of ideas; the care of a shepherd for his sheep, the anxiety of a woman for her treasure, the love of a father for his son. The son returns home, the father runs: the heart of God waiting and longing for the return of the sinner. Who else but God himself could have ventured to describe what goes on in the heart of God? It is only



his neck and kissed him. And when the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am not worthy, now, to be called your son," the father gave orders to his servants, "Bring out the best robe, and clothe him in it; put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. Then bring out the calf that has been fattened, and kill it; let us eat, and make merry; for my son here was dead, and has come to life again, was lost, and is found." And so they began their merry-making.

"The elder son, meanwhile, was away on the farm; and on his way home, as he drew near the house, he heard music and dancing; whereupon he called one of the servants and asked what all this meant. He told him, "Your brother has come back, and your father has killed the fattened calf, glad to have him restored safe and sound." At this he fell into a rage, and would not go in. When his father came out and tried to win him over, he answered his father thus, "Think how many years I have lived as your servant, never transgressing your commands, and you have never made me a present of a kid, to make merry with my friends; and now, when this son of yours has come home, one that has swallowed up your property in the company of harlots, you have killed the fattened calf in his honour."

'He said to him, "My son, you are always at my side, and everything that I have is already yours; but for this merry-making and rejoicing there was good reason; your brother here was dead, and has come to life again; was lost, and is found." '

### **Parable of the Dishonest Steward**

And he said to his disciples, "There was a rich man that had a steward, and a report came to him that this steward had wasted his goods. Whereupon he sent for him, and said to him, "What is this that I hear of you? Give an



the Son who knows the heart of the Father like that.

The first scene has been called 'the psychology of conversion' (see pp. 56-58); it contrasts the servitude of sin and the freedom of the father's house, a famine and a feast. Our Lord was probably near the meeting of the Jabbok and the Jordan; up the road to the east was the great Greek city of Gerasa, just the place to waste a fortune 'in riotous living.' The point of 'attaching himself to a citizen of that country' was the custom of expelling foreigners in time of famine. The lowest degradation for a Jew was to be a swineherd; since he could not get pig-food, he must have only been a herder; someone else had charge of the provisions. The 'husks' were bean-like pods of the carob or locust tree; they were often eaten by poor people. (The 'locusts' of John the Baptist, p. 30, were grasshoppers, which are still used as food by the Arabs.)

The third character is a study of the good; it was directed mainly at the Pharisees, who did not approve of our Lord's indulgent treatment of sinners. This elder son will not even acknowledge the prodigal as his brother—'this son of yours.' His statement, 'in the company of harlots,' is a rash judgment, since 'riotous living' refers only to wasting money in a spendthrift fashion. His outlook demonstrates how difficult fraternal charity is, unless joined to the love of God (p. 220); it is because God loves us that we should love one another (p. 352).

Many authorities, ancient and modern, think there is a further meaning to the parable: the elder brother represents the Jews, living in the Father's house, under the Old Covenant, and intent on observing all the commandments of the law; the younger son represents the Gentile world, far from God, squandering his natural gifts, and living in a famine of divine grace.

**Pella February 30 A.D.**

The 'crowds' of p. 256 are here called 'disciples' in a wide sense. Jesus barely touched on the subject of riches there; so, after the three parables on the mercy of God, he returns to the subject in a parable based on the tenant-farmer system. The



account of your stewardship, for you cannot be my steward any longer.”

‘At this the steward said to himself, “What am I to do, now that my master is taking my stewardship away from me? I have no strength to dig; I would be ashamed to beg for alms. I see what I must do, so as to be welcomed into men’s houses when I am dismissed from my stewardship.”

“Then he summoned his master’s debtors one by one; and he said to the first, “How much is it that you owe my master?”

‘ “A hundred barrels of oil,” he said.

‘And he told him, “Here is your bill; quick, sit down and write it as fifty.”

“Then he said to a second, “And you, how much do you owe?”

‘ “A hundred quarters of wheat,” he said.

‘And he told him, “Here is your bill, write it as eighty.”

‘And this knavish steward was commended by his master for his prudence in what he had done; for indeed, the children of this world are more prudent after their own fashion than the children of light. And my counsel to you is, make use of your base wealth to win yourselves friends, who, when you leave it behind, will welcome you into eternal habitations.

‘He who is trustworthy over a little sum is trustworthy over a greater; he who plays false over a little sum, plays false over a greater; if you, then, could not be trusted to use the base riches you had, who will put the true riches in your keeping? Who will give you property of your own, if you could not be trusted with what was only lent you? No servant can be in the employment of two masters at once; either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will devote himself to the one and despise the other.



wealthy owner ('master') lived in comfort in the city; he is taken up again in the next parable, (p. 264). His agent ('steward') attended to the rents paid in annually by the tenant-farmers ('debtors'); this was usually a third of the crop, and paid in kind; olive oil wheat, and wine were the principal products.

Many a gospel-reader would have felt easier in mind if our Lord had not made this steward quite so patently crooked. Some even try to explain his conduct as not at all dishonest; that is, he was out of pocket himself by his transactions with the debtors. But, since our Lord called him dishonest ('knave'), there is no point in whitewashing him. Jesus could have told a story of an honest but shrewd man, had he so desired; possibly he may have taken a topical incident, in which the man concerned was a swindler and a forger. Actually he had a very definite purpose in making him dishonest; this was to point out the danger of riches; they stick to the fingers; they hold a man back from the kingdom. And that surely is the second lesson of the parable, beginning at 'He who is trustworthy over a little. . .'

The diplomacy of the steward was to interview the tenants separately and get them to falsify their own rents; by this means he was the only witness to the forgery; the threat of disclosure would give him a permanent hold on these men. Even though the master were to find out what had been done, he would have to stand by the contracted rent, since the document could not be proven a forgery, except through this testimony of the steward. It is the steward's concern for the future ('men's houses') that a Christian must imitate, by making friends of the poor (who represent Jesus, p. 340) through almsgiving; they will prove themselves powerful advocates in heaven ('eternal habitations').

Then with a sudden change of thought, our Lord tells his disciples (here in the strict sense) what not to imitate in the steward: they must be 'trustworthy' even in the use of 'base riches,' which are only 'lent' them; otherwise they will not be worthy to use the spiritual riches of his kingdom. Then with a



You must serve God or money; you cannot serve both.'

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

The Pharisees, who were fond of riches, heard all this, and poured scorn on him. And he said to them, 'You are always courting the approval of men, but God sees your hearts; what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in God's sight. The law and the prophets lasted until John's time; since that time, it is the kingdom of heaven that has its preachers, and all who will, press their way into it. And yet it is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for one line of the law to perish.

'There was a rich man once, that was clothed in purple and lawn, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a beggar, called Lazarus, who lay at his gate, covered with sores, wishing that he could be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; why, the very dogs came and licked his sores. Time went on; the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom; the rich man died too, and was given burial. And in the abode of the dead, in his suffering, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

'And he said, with a loud cry, "Father Abraham, take pity on me; send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; I am tormented in this flame."

'But Abraham said, "My son, remember that you received your good fortune in your life-time, and Lazarus, no less, his ill fortune; now he is in comfort, you in torment. And, besides all this, there is a great gulf fixed between us and you, so that there is no passing from our side of it to you, no crossing over to us from yours."

'Whereupon he said, "Then, father, I pray you send him to my own father's house; for I have five brethren; let



third change of thought he personifies 'money'; there are only two masters; they both demand total dedication of their subjects.

Our Lord's teaching in Perea had been to a mixed audience; at times he addressed the friendly element in the crowds; and then he turned to the hostile members. The Pharisees were not at all impressed by his lessons from the previous parable; they were quite sure that one could serve both God and money. Was not material prosperity the promised sign of God's friendship? It was set down for them in the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 28).

Jesus replies that the law will stand, but it must be understood correctly. Riches were a sign of God's favour to the nation; the Pharisees applied it to individuals, especially themselves. Both in the law (Deut. 24, 9-13) and the prophets (Isaias 58, 6-8) charity to the poor was taught. And now in the new kingdom (the old ended with John the Baptist), the poor, so despised by the Pharisees, were taking their rightful places.

Our Lord continues the same line of thought as in the previous parable; he builds a story round the wealthy employer instead of the steward. In the steward-parable he showed the need and value of using money to make friends of the poor; in this parable he shows what happens when his advice is disregarded. The setting of the steward-parable was this life; the setting of this parable is the next life. Our Lord does not teach here the true nature of life after death; he accommodates his story to the restricted Jewish ideas of that time. All men went to Sheol ('the abode of the dead'); the life of the good there was pictured as a banquet (Lazarus had the seat of honour on Abraham's right, see p. 350); the evil-doers were punished by fire.

This is the only parable in which a character has a proper name. Lazarus may have been introduced only for literary considerations; the story is not so impressive if 'the beggar' is substituted for 'Lazarus' in the dialogue. Maybe our Lord was



him give these a warning, so that they may not come, in their turn, into this place of suffering."

'Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to these."

"They will not do that, father Abraham," said he; "but if a messenger comes to them from the dead, they will repent."

'But he answered him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will be unbelieving still, though one should rise from the dead."'

### **On Faith and Humility**

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Give us more faith.'

And the Lord said, 'If you had faith, though it were as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this sycamore tree, "Uproot yourself and plant yourself in the sea," and it would obey you.'

'If any one of you had a servant following the plough, or herding the sheep, would he say to him, when he came back from the farm, "Go and fall to at once"?'

'Would he not say to him, "Prepare my supper, and then gird yourself and wait upon me while I eat and drink; you shall eat and drink yourself afterwards"?'

'Does he hold himself bound in gratitude to such a servant, for obeying his commands? I do not think it of him; and you, in the same way, when you have done all that was commanded you, are to say, "We are servants, and worthless; it was our duty to do what we have done."'

### **The Ten Lepers**

A time came when he was on his way to Jerusalem, and was passing between Samaria and Galilee; and as he was going into a village, ten men that were lepers came towards him; they stood far off, crying aloud, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us.'

He met them with the words, 'Go and show yourselves



indicating that the good have their names 'enrolled in heaven' (p. 218). It is even possible that he used this name because of the resurrection of Lazarus, which instead of converting the Jews only confirmed them in their evil designs. That is the point of the conclusion of the parable; a spectacular miracle will not penetrate the soul like daily meditation on the word of God. What the Pharisees needed was humble faith, not striking miracles.

Many see in Dives (Latin for 'a rich man') a figure of the Jewish nation, with all the riches of the Old Testament at its disposal; the beggar at the gate is the Gentile world.

### River Yarmuk February 30 A.D.

This is the first time that St. Luke records any private teaching to the apostles in Perea. Undoubtedly our Lord did instruct them apart from the crowds, his thoughts mostly on their future work (p. 232). The difficulties and dangers they would encounter prompted their asking for 'more faith.' Our Lord used the same example of the power of faith on two other occasions; but then he spoke of a 'mountain,' not a tree (mount Hermon, p. 176, and mount Olivet, p. 308). For this scene he is probably near the river Yarmuk, in sight of the lake of Galilee; the sycamores with their roots in the edge of its waters suggested the image.

This parable is probably only a fragment of an instruction on the danger of pride, arising from their power to work great miracles, and the conversions they will make in their future labours. It is based on the state of slavery then common in Palestine. They must not think of themselves as great rabbis, like the Pharisees; they must humbly serve like slaves (p. 348).

### Scythopolis February 30 A.D.

The journey up the eastern bank of the Jordan finished south of the lake of Galilee; our Lord then crossed over to the western bank and began his journey southwards again. He was moving once more in the direction of Jerusalem; that is why St. Luke here makes mention of that city; it is never far from our Lord's thoughts during the whole of the Judean and Perean ministry.



to the priests'; and thereupon, as they went, they were made clean.

One of them, finding that he was cured, came back, praising God aloud, and threw himself at Jesus' feet with his face to the ground, to thank him; and this was a Samaritan.

Jesus answered, 'Were not all ten made clean? And the other nine, where are they? Not one has come back to give God the praise, except this stranger.'

And he said to him, 'Arise and go on your way, your faith has brought you recovery.'

### **Suddenness of the Second Coming**

Upon being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God was to come, he answered, 'The kingdom of God comes unwatched by men's eyes; there will be no saying, "See, it is here, or See, it is there"; the kingdom of God is here, among you.'

And to his own disciples he said, 'The time will come when you will long to enjoy, but for a day, the Son of Man's presence, and it will not be granted you. If they tell you, then, "See, he is here, in the desert," do not stir abroad; if they tell you, "See, he is there, in hidden places," do not believe them; when the Son of Man comes, it will be like the lightning that springs up from the east and flashes across to the west. But before that, he must undergo many sufferings, and be rejected by this generation.

'When the Son of Man comes, all will be as it was in the days of Noah; in those days before the flood, they went on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the time when Noah entered the ark, and they were taken unawares, when the flood came and drowned them all; so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. So it was, too, in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought and sold, they planted and built; but on the day



A village in the vicinity of the Decapolis city of Scythopolis would suit the situation; Samaria is mentioned to explain the presence of a Samaritan among the nine Jewish lepers.

Our Lord had cured a leper by the lakeside earlier (p. 70); he was cured first, then sent to the priest. Here, there is a greater test of faith; they are healed while on the way, probably out of sight, and at some distance from our Lord. Of all the people cured in the gospels, this man is the only one mentioned as showing gratitude for his cure. The ingratitude of the nine Jews shows how little they profited from miracles (p. 266); they are put to shame by a Samaritan outcast (p. 220).

### **Aenon February 30 A.D.**

A few miles south of Scythopolis is Aenon, where John had preached of the kingdom 'near at hand' (p. 50). That was two years ago, and still the kingdom had not come; the local Pharisees wanted Jesus to fix the day. The question of the year of the Messiah's arrival was often discussed by the rabbis. Since the scriptures said nothing of the date (Dan. 9, 24-27 means 'a long time yet,' not 400 years), they tried to calculate from the conditions of the times, and signs from heaven. They thought the coming of the kingdom would be as observable as a comet in the sky, or the arrival of Pontius Pilate at Jerusalem. That is where they were wrong: the kingdom had been founded already (p. 68), and was growing up among them like the mustard seed (p. 116). It was a fact, but not spectacular; to see it, they needed the eye of faith.

But Jesus himself had told the apostles he would come again (p. 238). They were thinking, like the Pharisees, that there would be some signs of this Second Coming (actually they ask this question later, p. 328). So, when they are alone, Jesus corrects their faulty ideas on the subject of his coming on the last day. He told them before (p. 232) that trials and persecutions awaited them; and he has yet to undergo his own passion and death. But the day of his return in glory at the end of time is a secret, which he will not reveal (p. 334). They must give up all



when Lot went out of Sodom, a rain of fire and brimstone came from heaven and destroyed them all. And so it will be, in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. I tell you, on that night, where two men are sleeping in one bed, one will be taken and the other left; one woman taken, one left, as they grind together at the mill, one man taken, one left, as they work together in the fields.'

Then they answered him, 'Where, Lord?'

And he told them, 'It is where the corpse lies that the vultures will gather.'

### **Parable of the Unjust Judge**

And he told them a parable, showing them that they ought to pray continually, and never be discouraged. 'There was a city once,' he said, 'in which lived a judge who had no fear of God, no regard for man; and there was a widow in this city who used to come before him and say, "Give me redress against one who wrongs me."

'For a time he refused; but then he said to himself, "Fear of God I have none, nor regard for man, but this widow wearies me; I will give her redress, or she will wear me down at last with her visits."

'Listen,' the Lord said, 'to the words of the unjust judge, and tell me, will not God give redress to his elect, when they are crying out to him, day and night? Will he not be impatient with their wrongs? I tell you, he will give them redress with all speed. But ah, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith left on the earth?'

### **Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican**

There were some who had confidence in themselves, thinking they had won acceptance with God, and despised the rest of the world; about them he told this other parable: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee, the other a publican.

'The Pharisee stood upright, and made this prayer in



attempts to discover signs of the nearness of his coming; otherwise false claimants will deceive them. His coming will be as sudden and unannounced as a flash of lightning. They must work on under hardship and persecution, preaching the gospel. At all costs they must not become visionaries looking for signs, or worldlings given up to pleasure and material interests. Everything will be going on as usual when suddenly and unexpectedly the Lord will come; then he will take the good to himself (1 Thessalonians 4, 16). His coming will not be to any one locality; all his elect will flock to him with a sureness and certainty like the instinct of vultures for finding a corpse.

The apostles had become so used to relying on Jesus that the thought of his absence all through the trying times he had just foretold filled them with dismay; they will long for his presence, and he will not come to them. The same sorrow depresses them during his discourse at the Last Supper; there he will soften the blow of his physical absence by telling them of the coming of the Holy Spirit (p. 356). Here his teaching is not so complete: by means of a parable he urges the need of persistent prayer; they must not sit back listlessly (p. 224). There is a comparison with the widow in the parable: their cause is just. There is a contrast with the judge: God is just. Nothing is said of the manner in which God will give redress; that is his concern (some idea of how he will is indicated in an earlier discourse, p. 170).

The last sentence is an aside, a cry of anguish at the thought of so many profiting nothing from his atonement; the world will go on its way, as in the days of Noah and Lot.

Most commentators think this parable was addressed to a new audience, a group of Pharisees, not the disciples. It seems more natural to take it as a development of the previous parable; the group of Pharisees on their way to Jerusalem serving our Lord as a new line of thought. He had told his disciples to pray unceasingly; they had right on their side; they were God's friends. This



his heart, "I thank you, God, that I am not like the rest of men, who steal and cheat and commit adultery, or like this publican here; for myself, I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess."

'And the publican stood far off; he would not even lift up his eyes towards heaven; he only beat his breast, and said, "God, be merciful to me; I am a sinner."

'I tell you, this man went back home higher in God's favour than the other; everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

### **Marriage, Divorce and Celibacy**

Then the Pharisees came to him, and put him to the test by asking, 'It is right for a man to put away his wife, for whatever cause?'

He answered, 'Have you never read, how he created them, when they first came to be, created them male and female; and how he said, "A man, therefore, will leave his father and mother and will cling to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? And so they are no longer two, they are one flesh; what God, then, has joined, let not man put asunder.'

'Why, then,' they said, 'did Moses enjoin that a man might give his wife a writ of separation, and then he might put her away?'

He told them, 'It was to suit your hard hearts that Moses allowed you to put your wives away; it was not so at the beginning of things. And I tell you that he who puts away his wife, not for any unfaithfulness of hers, and so marries another, commits adultery.'

And when they were in the house, his disciples asked him further about the same question. Whereupon he told them, 'If a man puts away his wife and marries another, he behaves adulterously towards her, and if a



could easily lead to arrogance: the 'elect' demanding God's favours as their right. Such an outlook is typical of the Pharisees; but God listens only to the prayers of the humble.

Both prayed in the Men's Court; standing, not kneeling, was the usual posture, hands and eyes raised to heaven; the Pharisee adopting a conscious pose (p. 94), the publican a natural gesture of repentance (p. 402). For the Pharisee, pp. 74, 320.

Many see in the Pharisee the Jewish nation, proud and satisfied with observance of the Mosaic law; in the publican, the Gentiles, conscious of their sinfulness and the need of redemption. Jesus had come to save both from sin.

### Phasaelis March 30 A.D.

The Mosaic law permitted divorce for 'defilement' (Dt. 24, 1). This ambiguous word was understood by Rabbi Shammai to mean 'unfaithfulness' in a wife; Rabbi Hillel would extend it to cover any defect displeasing to her husband. When our Lord was questioned about this debated point he clearly stated that from now on the marriage bond is unbreakable by any human authority; it is the divine will that man and wife should live together in a permanent union as did Adam and Eve.

Yet in his reply to their second question he seems to retract his first statement and permit divorce for 'unfaithfulness.' This is how Protestants generally interpret his words. The traditional Catholic solution understands our Lord to permit separation ('puts away') in case of unfaithfulness, but not the right to remarry. This is the way Paul understood Christ's teaching to wives: 'If she has left him, she must either remain unmarried, or go back to her own husband' (1 Cor. 7, 11).

In recent times an entirely new solution has been proposed: 'unfaithfulness' is a mistranslation of the Greek word *porneia*, which is a technical term meaning, 'marriage within the forbidden degrees of kinship.' The same word occurs in Acts 15, 29 (wrongly translated 'fornication') when the first council of the Church forbade Gentile converts to make such marriages.



woman puts away her husband and marries another, she is an adulteress.'

At this, his disciples said to him, 'If the case stands so between man and wife, it is better not to marry at all.'

'That conclusion,' he said, 'cannot be taken in by everybody, but only by those who have the gift. There are some eunuchs, who were so born from the mother's womb, some were made so by men, and some have made themselves so for love of the kingdom of heaven; take this in, you whose hearts are large enough for it.'

### **Jesus Blesses Little Children**

Then they brought little children to him, so that he might lay his hands on them in prayer; and his disciples rebuked those who brought them. But Jesus was indignant at seeing this; he called the children to him, and said, 'Let the children come to me, do not keep them back; the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you truthfully, the man who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child, will never enter into it.' And so he embraced them, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.

### **The Rich Young Man**

Then he went out to continue his journey; and one of the rulers ran up and knelt down before him, asking him, 'Master, who are so good, what must I do to achieve eternal life?'

Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? None is good, except God only. If you have a mind to enter into life, keep the commandments.'

'Which commandments?' he asked.

Jesus said, 'You shall do no murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not wrong any man, Honour your father and your mother, and You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'



This law was then written into Matthew's Gospel as an official clarification of our Lord's teaching: it is with his divine authority that the Church commands a man to put away the woman to whom he is not validly married.

But for his disciples Jesus has a higher vocation than marriage—that of celibacy. Like marriage it too is a permanent state (a 'eunuch' is one incapable of marriage) not a mere passing resolution. Such a spiritual and unselfish way of life Jesus himself has chosen, because it frees a man to give himself completely to God's service.

The intimate conversation of Jesus and his apostles was broken by the arrival of a number of women, who brought their babies into the house for the blessing of the great Rabbi; it is a fitting sequel to the discourse in which Jesus restored marriage to its original sanctity. He is indignant at the high-handed and officious conduct of his apostles (though it was meant for his protection); he is at the disposal of all men. At Capharnaum, six months before, he used one of Peter's children to show them that his kingdom is a family (p. 178); nothing moves the heart of God the Father as does the simple, unstudied affection of his children.

Our Lord has been coming south, on the western side of the Jordan; possibly the town of Phasaelis is the location of the discussion on divorce, and the incident of the children. As he is leaving his residence there, a youngish man of position and wealth runs up and greets him with an exaggerated show of reverence; he may have been one of the government officials in charge of the famous date-palm plantations at Phasaelis. He calls Jesus 'good,' probably in the meaning of gracious and benevolent; he has just heard one of the mothers telling about Jesus' gentleness to the children. Such sensitiveness and understanding of the finer things appeals to him; he would like to be in the company of such a noble man. Jesus would not be asking anything difficult or hard; did he not indicate that the affectionate love of a child



‘Master, I have kept all these,’ the young man told him, ‘ever since I grew up; where is it that I am still wanting?’

Then Jesus fastened his eyes on him, and conceived a love for him; ‘In one thing,’ he said, ‘you are still wanting. If you have a mind to be perfect, go home and sell all that belongs to you; give it to the poor, and so the treasure you have shall be in heaven; then come back and follow me.’ At this his face fell, and he went away sorrowing; he had great possessions.

And Jesus looked round, and said to his disciples, ‘With what difficulty will those who have riches enter God’s kingdom!’

The disciples were amazed at his words; but Jesus gave them a second answer, ‘My children, how hard it is to enter God’s kingdom! It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle’s eye, than for a man to enter the kingdom of God when he is rich.’

They were still more astonished; ‘Why then,’ they said to themselves, ‘who can be saved?’

Jesus fastened his eyes on them, and said, ‘Such things are impossible to man’s powers, but not to God’s; to God, all things are possible.’

Hereupon Peter took occasion to say, ‘And what of us who have forsaken all, and followed you; what is left for us?’

Jesus said to them, ‘I promise you, in the new birth, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit there on twelve thrones, you who have followed me, and shall be judges over the twelve tribes of Israel. And every man that has forsaken home, or wife, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, will receive, now in this world, a hundred times their worth, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands, but



was the outlook required of his own disciples?

Our Lord is aware of the honesty and good will of this young man. Possibly he has the makings of a disciple; a few questions will test his suitability. So he takes up the line of thought of the young man, 'good' and 'eternal life.' His purely human outlook and desire for a more perfect life must be replaced by submission to the will of God, who alone is Goodness; Jesus wants no devotees who exclude the Father. He then gives the young man a brief examination of conscience on his observance of God's will, the commandments; to these he adds the commandment of fraternal charity, the characteristic virtue of his kingdom. But the young man is impatient for perfection; he is ambitious; he wants to do something heroic. Like the Samaritan woman (p. 56), he has been prepared by Jesus for the real testing: is he prepared to abandon the one thing in the way of union with God? If he is, then Jesus will admit him to the highest vocation possible to man: to live the life of God's own Son. All the riches of heaven will be at his command; but first he must abandon those of earth.

Our Lord lived in poverty himself, and often counselled his disciples to do likewise (pp. 132, 216, 236); he had made it the first beatitude (p. 86); he had spoken three parables on the danger of riches (pp. 234, 262, 264). Yet his disciples were slow to understand; so he would emphasize it again, while the picture of the rich young man was still fresh in their minds. He expressed it in Hebrew fashion of exaggerated contrast (p. 94); there is no foundation for changing 'camel' to rope (*kamilos* in Greek), or for taking 'a needle's eye' as the small gate of a city.

Peter cannot bear such sadness in the Master; this time he said the right thing (p. 170). There is a sudden change from sorrow to joy, as Jesus turns to his chosen twelve. He will change the world's estimation of greatness by making these lowly followers of his the rulers of his kingdom on earth, the new Israel: 'they shall be first who were last.' They will be amply rewarded even in this life for what they have left; the new spiritual family of



with persecution; and in the world to come he will receive everlasting life. But many will be first that were last, and last that were first.

### **Parable of Labourers in the Vineyard**

‘Here is an image of the kingdom of heaven; a rich man went out at daybreak to hire labourers for work in his vineyard; and when he sent them out into his vineyard he agreed with the labourers on a silver piece for the day’s wages. About nine o’clock he came out again, and found others standing idle in the market-place; and to these also he said, “Away with you to the vineyard like the others; you shall have whatever payment is fair.” Away they went; and at noon, and once more about three, he came out and did the like. Yet he found others standing there when he came out about five. “How is it,” he said to them, “that you are standing here, and have done nothing all the day?”

“They told him, “It is because nobody has hired us.”

‘And he said, “Away with you to the vineyard like the rest.”

‘And now it was evening, and the owner of the vineyard said to his bailiff, “Send for the workmen and pay them their wages, beginning with the last comers and going back to the first.”

‘And so the men who were hired about five o’clock came forward, and each was paid a silver piece. So that when the others came, who were hired first, they hoped to receive more, but they were paid a silver piece each, like their fellows. And they were indignant with the rich man over their pay. “Here are these late-comers,” they said, “who have worked but one hour, and you have made no difference between them and us, who have borne the day’s burden and the heat.”

‘But he answered one of them thus: “My friend, I am not doing you a wrong; did we not agree on a silver piece



believers will possess a happiness far surpassing that of all natural ties (p. 106). The mention of 'persecution,' and omission of 'wife,' prove that Jesus is not promising mere worldly satisfaction.

### **Archelais March 30 A.D.**

There is no change of audience; Jesus is still speaking to his disciples, not to the Pharisees, or the crowds. Ordinarily parables were used for the people, not for the apostles; but Jesus sometimes made exceptions to this rule (pp. 182, 238, 334). The parable is closely linked with the preceding incident; the last verse of the previous paragraph is the transition, and is repeated again at the end of the parable. This parable illustrates the part played by the grace of God in the kingdom; it is a free gift that he gives to whomever he wills; God is not only just, he is lavish with undeserved favours. This is exemplified both in the apostles, who were last in rank (compared with the Pharisees) but have now become the rulers ('first') of the kingdom, and the Gentiles, who were last in time (the Jews were called centuries before) but will soon be predominant ('first') in the kingdom.

The whole parable is really a commentary on Jesus' statement to the apostles about the rich young man, 'To God all things are possible' (p. 276). God's grace plays its part in the kingdom, as well as man's own effort. In a similar parable, Jesus showed the need of personal striving to enter the kingdom (p. 250); here he takes up the other side of the picture (a line of thought familiar in St. Paul, e.g. Romans, 9, 14-16). There was danger that the apostles would be influenced by the outlook of their first teachers, the Pharisees (p. 166); these looked on God's favours as their just rights; Jesus' attitude to publicans and sinners was something they disapproved of (p. 256). So, by this parable, our Lord wished to impress on his followers God's mercy and grace to those who have not merited it, such as the penitent thief (p. 400).

In March the first signs of spring appear; in vineyards particularly it is a time of feverish work from daylight till dark. Most of the work is done by casual labour, since it is only seasonal. In



for your wages? Take what is your due, and away with you; it is my pleasure to give as much to this late-comer as you. Am I not free to use my money as I will? Must you give me sour looks, because I am generous?"

'So it is that they shall be first who were last, and they shall be last who were first.'

### Jesus Is Told of Lazarus' Illness

There was a man called Lazarus, of Bethany, who had fallen sick. Bethany was the name of the village where Mary lived, with her sister Martha; and this Mary, whose brother Lazarus had now fallen sick, was the woman who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair.

The sisters sent a message to him, to say, 'Lord, he whom you love lies here sick.'

And Jesus said, on hearing it, 'The end of this sickness is not death; it is meant for God's honour, to bring honour to the Son of God.'

Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. At the time, then, after hearing the news, he waited for two days in the place where he was; and then, after that interval, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go back into Judea.'

'Master,' his disciples said to him, 'the Jews were but now threatening to stone you; are you for Judea again?'

Jesus answered, 'Are there not just twelve hours of daylight? A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling, with this world's light to see by; he only stumbles if he walks by night, because then the light cannot reach him.'

So much he said, and then he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus is at rest now; I am going there to awake him.'

'But, Lord,' the disciples said to him, 'if he is rested, his life will be saved.' Jesus had been telling them of his



accordance with the Mosaic law (Deut. 24, 15), wages were to be paid at the end of each day's work; the 'silver piece' was a denarius, which means a day's pay. The order of payment in the parable is a device to introduce the dissatisfied spokesman of the union members; he sounds very much like the elder son in the parable of the Prodigal Son (p. 260).

This incident is found only in St. John; he is taking for granted the reader's knowledge of the intimacy of Jesus with the Bethany household (p. 222), and the part played by Mary at the banquet, which he has not yet described in his gospel (p. 298). The family at Bethany kept in touch with our Lord's activities through travellers coming up to Jerusalem; the Jordan valley was the main trade route from the north. The message, sent by hired courier, makes no mention of Lazarus by name, nor does it ask Jesus to come. This gives the right atmosphere: the need of secrecy because of the great danger to Jesus at Jerusalem (p. 246). Lazarus died while the courier was on his way to Jesus; yet his reply is meant for the two sisters as well as for his apostles. It is enigmatic, because he intends to test their faith; the true way to perfect union must come through belief in him who is their God, as well as their friend.

Our Lord was probably at Archelais, a few miles north of Jericho; it is not necessary to take him back to the east bank of the Jordan. The whole of the Jordan valley was often spoken of as an area distinct from both Judea and Perea; in this instance, 'Judea' really means Jerusalem, the headquarters of Jesus' enemies. It would be a good day's journey, about thirty miles uphill, from Archelais, passing through Jericho on the way. The thought of another visit to Jerusalem filled the disciples with dread; the deep discussions, the cold hatred of the leaders, baffled and bewildered them. In a little parable, Jesus explains that no harm can befall him until the time set by the Father has come; there are still a few weeks to go before the 'night' of his passion and death. But



death; but they supposed he meant the rest which comes with sleep.

So now Jesus told them openly, 'Lazarus is dead. And for your sakes, I am glad that I was not there; it will help you to believe. But come, let us make our way to him.'

Thereupon Thomas, who is also called Didymus, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us go too, and be killed along with him.'

### **Jesus Comforts Martha and Mary**

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been four days in the grave. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away, many of the Jews had gone out there to comfort Martha and Mary over the loss of their brother. Martha, when she heard that Jesus had come, went out to meet him, while Mary sat on in the house. 'Lord,' said Martha to Jesus, 'if you had been here my brother would not have died; and I know well that even now God will grant whatever you will ask of him.'

'Your brother,' Jesus said to her, 'will rise again.'

Martha said to him, 'I know well enough that he will rise again at the resurrection, when the last day comes.'

Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and life; he who believes in me, though he is dead, will live on, and whoever has life, and has faith in me, to all eternity cannot die. Do you believe this?'

'Yes, Lord,' she told him, 'I have learned to believe that you are the Christ; you are the Son of God; it is for your coming the world has waited.'

And with that she went back and called her sister Mary aside; 'The Master is here,' she said, 'and bids you come.' She rose up at once on hearing it, and went to him. (Jesus had not yet reached the village; he was still at the place where Martha had gone out to meet him.)



the knees of his disciples have turned to water; so he tries to shame them by calling Lazarus 'our friend'; he himself will go alone if they hold back. They make another pitiful attempt to escape by seizing on 'at rest'; sleep was an accepted medical sign that the patient was recovering. It would be foolish to go into danger, now that Jesus' presence at Bethany is no longer needed. Our Lord dashes their last hope of reprieve; Lazarus is dead. With a touch of bravado (p. 418), Thomas proclaims the loyalty of the twelve.

### **Bethany on Mount Olivet March 30 A.D.**

In Palestine, funerals took place the same day that the person died; it was customary for relatives and friends to visit the grave for three days after death, but not on the fourth day when decomposition began; sympathetic mourners came to console the relatives for seven days after the funeral. Probably a servant of the household was posted to watch for Jesus' arrival; as soon as the group on the Jericho road was identified, word was brought to Martha; she met Jesus on the eastern edge of the town. Her first remark (echoed later by Mary) shows how confident she was of Jesus' affection, and her belief in his supernatural power. His message by the courier had puzzled both sisters. Could it be that he meant to bring their brother back from the dead?

Jesus does not say that he will raise Lazarus. Martha, like most of the Jews, believed in the general resurrection (p. 254); but that was a long way off. Actually Jesus is raising her mind to supernatural life; faith in him gives the believer access to a life which death cannot destroy; it is eternal. Through union with Jesus, Lazarus is still united to Martha. Her faith is strengthened; she feels consoled, but she does not conclude from his words that her brother is to rise that very day.

Meanwhile Mary is in the house, besieged by comforters who can give her no relief from her sorrow. Jesus tells Martha to extricate her quietly from the visitors. Mary's thoughts were on Jesus all the time: 'If only he were here.' At the mention of his name, she is out of the room in a flash; on past the tomb she



And so the Jews who were in the house with Mary, comforting her, when they saw how quickly she rose up and went out, followed her; 'She has gone to the grave,' they said, 'to weep there.'

### Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead

So Mary reached the place where Jesus was; and when she saw him, she fell at his feet; 'Lord,' she said, 'if you had been here my brother would not have died.'

And Jesus, when he saw her in tears, and the tears of the Jews who accompanied her, sighed deeply, and distressed himself over it; 'Where have you buried him?' he asked.

'Lord,' they said to him, 'come and see.'

Then Jesus wept.

'See,' said the Jews, 'how he loved him.'

And some of them asked, 'Could not he, who opened the blind man's eyes, have prevented this man's death?'

So Jesus, once more sighing to himself, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone had been put over the mouth of it. 'Take away the stone,' Jesus told them.

And Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, 'Lord, the air is foul by now; he has been four days dead.'

'Why,' Jesus said to her, 'have I not told you that if you have faith, you will see God glorified?'

So they took the stone away; and Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven, 'Father,' he said, 'I thank you for hearing my prayer. For myself, I know that you hear me at all times, but I say this for the sake of the people that are standing round, that they may learn to believe it is you who have sent me.'

And with that he cried in a loud voice, 'Come out, Lazarus, to my side.' Whereupon the dead man came out, his feet and hands tied with cords, and his face bound up with a chinband.

'Loose him,' said Jesus, 'and let him go free.'



runs, weeping as she goes. There is the same contrast between the two sisters as in two other scenes at Bethany (pp. 222, 298); Martha the elder and more practical, Mary intense and emotional. With Martha, Jesus reasoned; he wept with Mary.

This is one of the most dramatic scenes in all literature. The real human emotion of Jesus, moved to the very depths of his being; his anguish more intense as he caught sight of the tomb of his friend; his words brief, almost abrupt, like those of a man afraid to trust his voice. And then the prayer of one intimately united to the Father and speaking in his name; the voice of him to whom even death is obedient; the miracle of divine power. The human and divine natures of our Lord are here portrayed with the simple naturalness of an eyewitness (p. 122).

A well-known picture of the resurrection of Lazarus shows him wrapped up in bandages like an Egyptian mummy. That is false. 'Cords' are either rope or leather thongs, not bandages; the Jews did not swathe their dead. Either, as in our Lord's case (p. 404), the body was wrapped in a white linen sheet (sindon in Greek) or, as in the case of the widow's son (p. 100) and Dorcas (Acts 9, 36-41), it was buried in its own clothes. I think Lazarus was laid in the tomb in his own clothes, not covered from head to foot in a linen sheet. A white shrouded figure rising from the grave would have had a terrifying effect on the spectators, not to mention his own embarrassment when freed, after the miracle. I have taken the object over his head to be a 'chinband' (soudarion in Greek; the same article is listed, distinct from the sindon, in our Lord's tomb, p. 410); it was tied under the chin and over the top of the head like a handkerchief, to keep the mouth closed. It was an essential article of Jewish burial. The 'cords' are not mentioned elsewhere in burial literature; possibly they were used to keep the body in position till rigor mortis set in. Both were visible as Lazarus appeared from the tomb, which was below the surface of the ground; a flight of steps led down to it. He that could not walk or talk, or even lift a hand to help himself, stood there obedient to the voice of his Lord.



### Caiphas Urges the Death Penalty

Many of the Jews who had visited Mary, and seen what Jesus did, learned to believe in him, but some went off to the Pharisees, and reported to them all Jesus had done. So the chief priests and Pharisees summoned a council; 'What are we about?' they said. 'This man is performing many miracles, and if we leave him to his own devices, he will find credit everywhere. Then the Romans will come, and make an end of our city and our race.'

And one of them, Caiphas, who held the high priesthood in that year, said to them, 'You have no perception at all; you do not reflect that it is best for us if one man is put to death for the sake of the people, to save a whole nation from destruction.' It was not of his own impulse that he said this; holding the high priesthood as he did in that year, he was able to prophesy that Jesus was to die for the sake of the nation; and not only for that nation's sake, but so as to bring together into one all God's children, scattered far and wide.

From that day forward, then, they plotted his death; and Jesus no longer went about openly among the Jews, but retired to a city called Ephrem, in the country which borders on the desert, and waited there with his disciples.

The paschal feast which the Jews keep was now close at hand, and there were many from the country who went up to Jerusalem to purify themselves before paschal time began; so they looked out for Jesus, and said to one another as they stood there in the temple, 'What is your way of it? Will he come up to the feast?'

And the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where he was should report it to them, so that they could arrest him.



**Jerusalem March 30 A.D.**

The Jewish leaders made no secret of their opposition to Jesus; on the three occasions of his visits to Jerusalem in the previous year, they had tried to take his life (pp. 158, 194, 206, 246). But each time they had been stirred to anger by his words of condemnation and his claim to be more than man; this time it is a miracle of friendship that is the occasion of their hatred. There is no discussion of his guilt; his death is merely a matter of expediency. The people were looking for a national hero to deliver them from the domination of Rome; such miracles could easily lead them to proclaim Jesus king, and rise in revolt (p. 140). Caiphas was well satisfied in his present position; he had no desire to know God's will, or to follow out the best plan for the religious interests of the chosen people; he was a selfish, worldly politician intent on appeasement.

By Jewish law the high priesthood was hereditary and held for life. Actually the Romans deposed and nominated at will; Caiphas had been selected by the Roman governor to replace his father-in-law Annas, twelve years before. He was the last high priest of the Old Covenant; this year (30 A. D.) was to see the inauguration of the New Covenant. He was still God's representative, and, despite his malice, God would use him as his instrument; the words he spoke had a deeper meaning than he himself understood: Jesus' death was to bring salvation to Israel, and to the whole world.

Warned of this decision, probably by Nicodemus (p. 196), Jesus did not venture into Jerusalem; two weeks had yet to run before the time appointed by his Father. He would not needlessly expose himself to danger (an important lesson for his followers in time of persecution). He would spend a last few days of recollection with his apostles, in preparation for the final act of his mortal life. Jews from distant lands were streaming into Jerusalem for the last paschal feast. The millions of spotless lambs (Exodus 12, 5) would now find fulfilment in the one and only perfect victim (1 Cor. 5, 7).



## Chapter 10: The Last Week



THERE was magic in the name, Jerusalem; it was music to the ears of every Jew. All the glory of the past, all the hopes of the future were embodied in that one place. It was David's city; he had captured it (2 Kings 5) and made it the capital of his kingdom (Sion was its ancient name). David's son, the Messiah, would come there to reign eternally; he would restore national freedom to his people, now subject to a foreign ruler; all the greatness and glory of David's time would be theirs once more.

When a Jew thought of Jerusalem, it was not the walled city that came first to mind; it was the temple, God's dwelling-place among his people. 'Here, for ever, is my resting-place, here is my destined home' (Psalm 131, 14). If Mass could be celebrated in no other church but St. Peter's, and the Blessed Sacrament reserved there alone, that would represent the unique position Jerusalem had for a Jew. The 'holy of holies' was God's private room (like the tabernacle in a church); it was his only dwelling on this earth. The 'holy place' was the nearest man could come to him (like the sanctuary in a church). In front of his two-roomed house was the altar of burnt-offerings (our sanctuary lamp is taken from that perpetual fire before the Lord); on it alone could sacrifice be offered.

The first temple was built by Solomon about 1,000 B.C. as a permanent house to replace the temporary tabernacle of the Exodus. It was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587; a second temple was built seventy years later. In 20 B.C. Herod the Great began the work of restoring this poor, shabby structure, to its original magnificence. It was not completed until 63 A.D.

The essential feature of the whole temple (Greek *hieron*) was the white limestone, gold-plated cedar house of God (Greek *naos*, translated 'sanctuary'), sixty feet high, and raised sixty steps (45 feet) above the Gentiles' Court. It had an inner court for those engaged in the service of the Lord; a stone wall, four feet six inches high (*soreg*), separated it from the outer court. All courts were paved with varicoloured stone. (For a detailed description, see Josephus, *Jewish War*, book v, chapter 5; *Antiquities*, xv, 11.)



### Third Prediction of the Passion

And now they were on the way going up to Jerusalem; and still Jesus led them on, while they were bewildered and followed him with faint hearts. Then once more he brought the twelve apostles to his side, and began to tell them what was to befall him: 'Now we are going up to Jerusalem, and all that has been written by the prophets about the Son of Man is to be accomplished; there he will be given up into the hands of the chief priests and scribes, who will condemn him to death; and these will give him up into the hands of the Gentiles, who will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; but on the third day he will rise again.'

They could make nothing of all this; his meaning was hidden from them, so that they could not understand what he said.

### Ambition of the Sons of Zebedee

Thereupon the mother of the sons of Zebedee brought them to him, falling on her knees to make a request of him.

And when he asked her, 'What is your will?' she said to him, 'Here are my two sons; grant that in your kingdom one may take his place on your right and the other on your left, when you are glorified.'

But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what it is you ask. Have you strength to drink of the cup I am to drink of, to be baptized with the baptism I am to be baptized with?'

They said to him, 'We have.'

And Jesus told them, 'You shall indeed drink of the cup I am to drink of, and be baptized with the baptism I am to be baptized with; but a place on my right hand or my left is not mine to give; it is for those for whom my Father has destined it.'

The ten others grew indignant with James and John



**Near Ephrem Thursday 30 March**

Our Lord stayed only a week at Ephrem; the time had now come for him to lay down his life. The determined, resolute attitude of the Master filled his followers with dark forebodings; to go back to Jerusalem now was more dangerous than ever. They set off, following him without enthusiasm, down the narrow, winding track to the Jordan valley towards Jericho; this was not the most direct route to Jerusalem, but it was safer with all the pilgrims coming from Galilee to Jerusalem by Jericho.

Our Lord stopped along the road and waited for his lagging, downcast apostles. How slow they were to realize that the Messiah must suffer and die. He had told them explicitly twice before (pp. 170, 176); he would repeat it now, with even more detail of the nature of his sufferings. At all costs they must be prepared for the shock of his passion and death; glory would come, but only after the cross and three days in the tomb.

There are two distinct groups here among our Lord's followers: first, the twelve apostles, second the other disciples (p. 216), with the women who attended to the material needs of Jesus and his associates (p. 106). Although these women have not been mentioned since the Galilean ministry, it appears that they remained in our Lord's company. Possibly some of them may have joined him again at this stage, on their way up to Jerusalem for the paschal feast; they are with him when he dies (p. 402).

Salome is greatly impressed by the noble bearing of the Master, the conqueror marching ahead of his troops to certain victory. She takes the opportunity of a pause in the journey to approach Jesus with her two sons, while all the rest hold back afraid, and somewhat ashamed of their cowardice. Two men like her sons are what the Master needs as his lieutenants; they will not fail him; they will stand by him no matter what happens. Had not the Master himself called them 'sons of thunder'? (p. 82). Though grateful for their loyalty to him, Jesus explains that there is only one way to become intimately associated with him: by



when they heard of it. But Jesus called them to him, and said to them, 'You know that, among the Gentiles, those who bear rule lord it over them, and those who are great among them make the most of the power they have. With you it must be otherwise; whoever would be a great man among you, must be your servant, and whoever has a mind to be first among you, must be everybody's slave. So it is that the Son of Man did not come to have service done him; he came to serve others, and to give his life as a ransom for the lives of many.'

### **Jesus Cures Blind Bartimaeus**

When he came near Jericho, with his disciples and with a great crowd, there was a blind man, Bartimaeus, sitting there by the wayside begging. And he, hearing a crowd passing by, asked what it meant; so they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth was going past. Whereupon he cried out, 'Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.'

Those who were in front rebuked him, and told him to be silent, but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'

Then Jesus stopped, and said, 'Call him here.'

So they summoned the blind man; 'Take heart,' they said, 'and rise up; he is summoning you.'

Whereupon he threw away his cloak and leapt to his feet, and so came to Jesus.

Then Jesus answered him, 'What would you have me do for you?'

And the blind man said to him, 'Lord, give me back my sight.'

And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched his eyes, and said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has brought you recovery.' And at once the man recovered his sight, and followed Jesus on his way, glorifying God; all the people, too, gave praise to God at seeing it.



suffering with him (for imagery of 'cup' see p. 372); for 'baptism' p. 240). As for a place of honour in the kingdom, all that has been determined by the Father; Jesus will carry out that plan, not change it.

The confidential conversation did not escape the eyes of the other apostles. So Jesus took occasion to give them a lesson on concord and humility; it was not the first (p. 178), nor the last (pp. 346-348). His kingdom is not based on false human standards of honour; the title of his followers should be 'servus servorum Dei' (this title is still used by the pope). He himself was about to offer his life to redeem mankind from the bondage of sin.

### **Near Jericho Thursday 30 March**

It was probably early afternoon when Jesus and his followers approached the city of Jericho, after a four hour walk down the mountain pass from Ephrem; pilgrims from Galilee and Perca had joined his little company. A new excitement and jubilation swept through the crowd at the presence of the Master who had been away from them for the past six months. In three days' time, this same crowd will shout the same Messianic cries as Jesus rides in triumph into Jerusalem. The blind man by the roadside probably picked up his 'son of David' from the crowd. It was a title used with a definite Messianic meaning (p. 29).

This is the sixth blind man cured by our Lord in the gospels; the cure of two of them has been described in detail (pp. 168, 206). He shares with Lazarus and Malchus the rare honour of being named by the evangelist at the time of his cure; this was probably due to his prominence in Christian circles when St. Mark wrote his gospel (that is why he mentions 'Alexander and Rufus' p. 396). He is a good illustration of the principle of persistent prayer, taught by Jesus in two parables (pp. 224, 270). He threw his cloak aside, so as to run more quickly. Jesus questioned him, not to find out what he wanted, but to obtain a public act of faith; he is always interested in the individual soul, even in the midst of crowds and excitement (p. 126); with him it is persons rather than people. And the stray sheep recognizes the voice of the Shepherd.



### Zacchaeus the Publican

He had entered Jericho, and was passing through it; and here a rich man named Zacchaeus, the chief publican, was trying to distinguish which was Jesus, but could not do so because of the crowd, being a man of small stature. So he ran on in front, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, to catch sight of him, since he must needs pass that way.

Jesus, when he reached the place, looked up and saw him; 'Zacchaeus,' he said, 'make haste and come down; I am to lodge today at your house.' And he came down with all haste, and gladly made him welcome.

When they saw it, all were indignant; 'He has gone in to lodge,' they said, 'with one who is a sinner.'

But Zacchaeus stood upright and said to the Lord, 'Here and now, Lord, I give half of what I have to the poor; and if I have wronged anyone in any way, I make restitution of it fourfold.'

Jesus turned to him and said, 'Today, salvation has been brought to this house; he too is a son of Abraham. That is what the Son of Man has come for, to search out and to save what was lost.'

### Parable of the Pounds

While they stood listening, he went on and told them a parable; this was because he had now nearly reached Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He told them, then, 'There was a man of noble birth, who went away to a distant country, to have the royal title bestowed on him, and so return. And he summoned ten of his servants, to whom he gave ten pounds, and said to them, "Trade with this while I am away."

'But his fellow citizens hated him, and sent ambassadors after him to say, "We will not have this man for our king."



**Jericho Thursday 30 March**

Here is an example of how a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven by the Grace of God (p. 276); it is also a practical application of the three parables of divine mercy (pp. 256-260). Again, the rare use of a proper name for a casual character in the gospels seems to indicate Zacchaeus' standing in early Christian circles; an early legend makes him bishop of Caesarea. His interest in Jesus, due mainly to the resurrection of Lazarus, leads him to disregard personal dignity; and such lowliness is always suitable soil for the working of divine grace.

The crowd, not the usual Pharisees, are taken aback at such an action on the part of the royal Messiah of the house of David; he should know that Zacchaeus is a renegade to the cause, a man in the pay of the enemy, Rome. But Jesus has come to save men from a different enemy, sin; and Zacchaeus' first reaction to the presence of Jesus is an admission of his own sinfulness and his purpose of amendment here and now. This is the resolution of a repentant sinner, not a boast of past activities (pp. 270-272). Giving of possessions as alms to the poor had been advised by Jesus (p. 262). 'Fourfold' was Roman, and, in some cases, Jewish law of restitution for convicted theft (2 Kings 12, 6).

A first reading of this parable might give the impression that our Lord did not stay the night with Zacchaeus, but departed that same day for Jerusalem. But such a reconstruction is improbable. There is no point in leaving Jericho in the late afternoon; it would take a good six hours walking to Jerusalem; and that would mean camping out for the night in bandit country. It seems more likely that Jesus and his followers were present at a meal in Zacchaeus' home (p. 72), and in the course of the meal our Lord told this parable. The following morning, Friday, they set out for Jerusalem, and on Saturday sat down to another meal at Bethany.

A great change came over the apostles in the course of the day; they had been dispirited and dismayed that morning when Jesus



'Afterwards, when he came back as king, he sent for the servants to whom he had entrusted the money, to find out how much each of them had gained by his use of it. The first came before him and said, "Lord, your pound has made ten pounds."

'And he said to him, "Well done, my true servant: since you have been faithful over a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities."

"The second came and said, "Lord, your pound has made five pounds."

'And to him he said, "You too shall have authority, over five cities."

"Then another came and said, "Lord, here is your pound; I have kept it laid up in a handkerchief. I was afraid of you, knowing how exacting a man you are; you claim what you never ventured, reap what you never sowed."

"Then he said to him, "You false servant, I take your judgment from your own lips. You knew that I was an exacting man, claiming what I never ventured and reaping what I never sowed; then why did you not put my money into the bank, so that I might have recovered it with interest when I came?"

"Then he gave orders to those who stood by, "Take the pound away from him, and give it to the man who has ten pounds."

"They said to him, "Lord, he has ten pounds already."

' "Nay, but I tell you, if ever a man is rich, gifts will be made to him, and his riches will abound; if he is poor, even the little he has will be taken from him. But as for those enemies of mine, who refused to have me for their king, bring them here and kill them in my presence." '

And when he had spoken thus, he went on his way, going up to Jerusalem.



had set off resolutely for Jerusalem. But the presence of the Galilean crowd, high-spirited and enthusiastic, especially after the healing of Bartimaeus at the gates of Jericho, had been infectious. As they sat there amidst the excited guests of Zacchaeus, all their misgivings about the outcome at Jerusalem vanished. They were now impatient to be on the way, they, the personal bodyguard of the Messiah, who soon would be enthroned in glory. Jericho was the last stage of the journey, almost a suburb of Jerusalem; suddenly they realized that it was the eve of the great day; the time had come at last (see p. 268).

To correct this attitude of his disciples and the other guests, our Lord told this parable. Its main lesson is the time element: Jesus has to go away, and stay away for a long time before he comes in glory at the end of time; the loyalty and perseverance of the members of his kingdom will be tested over a long period, before they are rewarded by the king. This parable pictures life in the kingdom on earth, already in existence (p. 268). The kingdom they are thinking of exists only in heaven; it is the reward for faithful service in the kingdom on earth. There they will be enthroned with Jesus, sharing in the joy of the Lord (p. 336).

The scenery of the parable is typical of Jericho: trade was the very life of the place. Not only the taxes of the Jordan valley, but the produce of the lake of Galilee and the Perea highlands came to Jerusalem through Jericho. It was also the hot-house, the pantry which supplied the capital city. Our Lord's imagery would be intently followed by Zacchaeus and his fellow publicans. To some extent the parable proposes Zacchaeus' way of life as a model for the members of the kingdom: they must 'trade' with the grace given them, not sit around in idleness. Jericho was also a Herodian city; Herod the Great built it, lived and died there. He had set out from there to obtain his kingship from the Roman emperor; his son Archelaus had done likewise. Our Lord used these facts as local colour for his parable.



### **Mary Anoints Jesus for Burial**

Six days before the paschal feast, Jesus went to Bethany. Bethany was the home of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised to life. And a feast was made for him there, in the house of Simon the leper, at which Martha was waiting at table, while Lazarus was one of his fellow-guests. And now Mary brought in a pot of pure spikenard ointment, which was very precious; and, first breaking the pot, poured it over Jesus's head; then she poured it over his feet, wiping his feet with her hair; the whole house was scented with the ointment.

The disciples were indignant when they saw it, and said among themselves, 'What did she mean by wasting the ointment so?'

One of them, the same Judas Iscariot who was to betray him, said, 'Why should not this ointment have been sold? It would have fetched three hundred silver pieces, and alms might have been given to the poor.' He said this, not from any concern for the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse, and took what was put into it.

But Jesus said to them, 'Let her alone; why should you vex her? She did well to treat me so. You have the poor among you always, so that you can do good to them when you will; I am not always among you. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand to prepare it for burial. I promise you, in whatever part of the world this gospel is preached, the story of what she has done shall be told in its place, to preserve her memory.'

### **Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

A great number of the Jews heard that he was there and went out there, not only on account of Jesus, but so as to have sight of Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead; and the chief priests made a plot against Lazarus' life too,



**Bethany Saturday 1 April**

There was not the danger to Jesus' life as on the previous visit to Bethany, a fortnight earlier (p. 280); this time pilgrims from Galilee and Perea accompanied him and his followers. Since the banquet was held on Saturday ('six days before the paschal feast'), our Lord must have made the journey from Jericho on Friday; it was against the law to travel more than a mile on the sabbath. Possibly he waited nearby, and entered the village of Bethany sometime on Saturday. Most likely he stayed with Lazarus and his two sisters; all were invited to a meal on Saturday evening, at a friend's house in the village; this man was indebted to Jesus, who had cured him of his leprosy (not recorded in the gospels).

The use of perfumed oil was a common practice; a small amount on the head and face after washing was refreshing (p. 94). But Mary was lavish with her expensive spikenard, treasured and kept from Lazarus' funeral rites. She alone of all those present understood that Jesus was soon to die; instead of talking and asking questions she had been listening to him (p. 222). That is why she used all the contents of the vase of ointment; a body had to be thoroughly anointed for burial. It was not a courteous act of hospitality but a sorrowful farewell. She may even have known that there would not be time to perform this rite after death; so tonight she would anticipate that day (pp. 404, 408). This anointing is certainly distinct from that in Galilee (p. 104); it seems more probable that it is the same woman who did both anointings and that she is also known as Mary Magdalen. The unusual act of wiping Jesus' feet with her hair (there must have been towels handy) was a calculated gesture on Mary's part reminding Jesus of that other incident in her conversion at Magdala in Galilee.

**Mount Olivet Sunday 2 April**

When the pilgrims arrived at Jerusalem they heard of Lazarus' resurrection for the first time. Bethany became the centre of attraction, especially when the new arrivals from Jericho told of Jesus' presence there. It was probably to avoid this pilgrim in-



because so many of the Jews, on his account, were beginning to go off and find faith in Jesus.

Next day, a great crowd of those who had come up for the feast, hearing that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, took palm branches with them and went out to meet him. When he was approaching Bethphage, close to the mountain which is called Olivet, he sent two of his disciples on an errand; 'Go into the village that faces you,' he told them, 'and the first thing you will find there upon entering will be a she-ass and a colt tethered at her side, one on which no man has ever ridden; untie it, and bring it to me. And if anyone asks you, "Why are you doing that?" tell him, "The Lord has need of it, and is sending it back here quite soon."'

All this was so ordained, to fulfil the word spoken by the prophet: 'Do not be afraid, daughter of Sion; behold, your king is coming to you, humbly, riding on an ass, on a colt whose mother has borne the yoke.' The disciples did not understand all this at the time; only after Jesus had attained his glory did they remember what they had done, and how it fulfilled the words written of him.

So the two he had appointed went on their way, and found the colt tethered before a door at the entrance, just as he had told them. As they were untying it, its owners asked them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?'

And they said, 'Because the Lord has need of it,' and were allowed to take it.

So they brought the she-ass and its colt to Jesus, and saddled it with their garments, and bade Jesus mount. As he went, many spread their garments along the way, while others strewed the way with branches cut down from the trees, and greenery from the fields. And those who went before him and followed after him cried aloud, 'Hosanna for the son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, blessed is the king of Israel; blessed is the kingdom of our father David which is coming to us;



terest that the banquet was held at a friend's house on Saturday evening. Early on Sunday morning many pilgrims, and some local residents as well, came out to Bethany to escort Jesus into Jerusalem; this was the customary procedure for all groups of pilgrims coming up for the paschal feast. The Pharisees were part of the official delegation, waiting at the summit ('the descent') of Olivet to welcome the procession forming at Bethany.

Bethany is almost two miles east of Jerusalem, and hidden from view by mount Olivet; Bethphage is on the same side of Olivet as Bethany, but it is nearer the summit. The crowd (mostly Galilean, not Judean like the crowd on Good Friday, p. 390) met our Lord at Bethany and escorted him with festive palm branches along the road towards Jerusalem. They were familiar enough with his ideas to know that he would not approve of over-exuberant nationalism; they surely remembered his flight from their acclaim a year before (p. 140). But Jesus has a surprise for them today; publicly and unmistakably he will claim to be their Messiah. He has chosen the time (it is now only a few days till his death), the place (within sight of the Roman legions in fortress Antonia), and the manner (a donkey, not a war-horse; thus he minimizes the danger of a national uprising and shows that he is a peaceful king, not a military leader against Rome).

The gospels give much space to the donkey. Jesus stopped short of Bethphage and sent two of the twelve (probably Peter and John) on a secret mission. He was using his divine knowledge to acquire this animal. The owner was probably a friend of the Bethany family; our Lord employed this roundabout method to get the animal, so as not to compromise the owner in case of investigation by the Jewish authorities. The donkey was unbroken, so about a year old (they were broken in at fifteen months); it could not be led easily without bringing its mother as well. Even though never ridden before, it submitted quietly to its Creator. (Chesterton has immortalized it in his poem, 'The Donkey.')

A murmur of excitement ran through the growing crowd as Peter and John came back down the road with the two animals.



Hosanna in the heaven above.'

And when he drew near the descent of mount Olivet, the whole company of his disciples began rejoicing and praising God for all the miracles they had seen. 'Blessed is the king,' they said, 'who comes in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, glory above!'

Some of the Pharisees who were among the crowd said to him, 'Master, rebuke your disciples.'

But he answered, 'I tell you, if they should keep silence, the stones will cry out instead.'

There were many who had been with him, when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him to life, and these too bore witness of him. Indeed, that was why the crowd went out to meet him, because they had heard of his performing this miracle. And the Pharisees said to one another, 'Do you see how vain are your efforts? Look, the whole world has turned aside to follow him.'

### Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

And as he drew near, and caught sight of the city, he wept over it, and said: 'Ah, if you too could understand, above all in this day, the ways that can bring peace! As it is, they are hidden from your sight. The days will come upon you when your enemies will fence you round about, and encircle you, and press you hard on every side, and bring down in ruin both you and your children that are in you, not leaving one stone of you upon another; and all because you did not recognize the time of my visiting you.'

So he came to Jerusalem, and went into the temple. The whole city was in a stir; 'Who is this?' they asked.

And the crowd answered, 'This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, in Galilee.'

And there were blind and lame men who came up to him in the temple, and he healed them there. The chief priests and scribes saw the miracles which he did, and the



When a few cloaks were thrown on the back of the colt as a saddle, and Jesus mounted the beast, the crowd went wild with enthusiasm. At last the Master had fallen in with their plans; they had known all along that he was really the Messiah. This spontaneous act of his was proof that the kingdom had now come: the son of David was going to Jerusalem for his enthronement. Well, they would give him an entry that would befit the long-awaited king. A carpet for the king! Cloaks, branches from olive trees, any greenery they could find to hand, maybe flowers too. An eastern display: shouts and acclamations ('hosanna' is about the same as the Italian 'viva'), singing and musical instruments (1 Mac. 13, 51).

The high point of the procession came as they topped mount Olivet ('the descent'), and Jerusalem lay before them, its temple glittering in the morning sunlight. They began recounting Jesus' miracles, notably the raising of Lazarus. There was a halt here, as the official delegation ('the Pharisees') met the procession. To their rebuke, Jesus replied with a proverbial saying (Habacuc 2, 11): Even inanimate creation will acknowledge its Creator.

The summit of Olivet is about two hundred feet higher than the walled city of Jerusalem; separating them is the Kedron valley. This is the first view of the city for pilgrims coming up from Jericho; they are almost at the gates of the city before they can see it. It is one of those breath-taking sights, sudden, unexpected, and almost unbelievable; it is an unforgettable experience even at the present day. At Jesus' feet, down in the Kedron valley, was the garden of Gethsemani; outside the west gate of the city was the hillock of Golgotha. But he was not thinking of either of these places; his eyes were fixed on the city itself, the capital of king David, the very symbol of Jewry. The temple there was the religious centre of the Jewish world, God's dwelling-place among his chosen people. He sees it in forty years' time, completely destroyed by the Roman army of Titus (pp. 328-332).

When our Lord paused at the summit of Olivet, with a jubilant, clamorous crowd about him, he was not carried away by their



boys that cried aloud in the temple, 'Hosanna for the son of David,' and they were greatly angered at it.

'Do you hear what these are saying?' they asked.

'Yes,' Jesus said to them, 'but have you never read the words, "You have made the lips of children, of infants at the breast, vocal with praise"?'

### **Jesus Prophesies His Own Death**

And there were certain Greeks, among those that had come up to worship at the feast, who approached Philip, the man from Bethsaida in Galilee, and made a request of him; 'Sir,' they said, 'we desire to see Jesus.' Philip came and told Andrew, and together Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

And Jesus answered them thus, 'The time has come now for the Son of Man to achieve his glory. Believe me when I tell you this; a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else it remains nothing more than a grain of wheat; but if it dies, then it yields rich fruit. He who loves his life will lose it; he who is an enemy to his own life in this world will keep it, so as to live eternally. If anyone is to be my servant, he must follow my way; so shall my servant too be where I am. If anyone serves me, my Father will do him honour.

'And now my soul is distressed. What am I to say? I will say, Father, save me from undergoing this hour of trial; and yet, I have only reached this hour of trial that I might undergo it. Father, make your name known.'

And at this, a voice came from heaven, 'I have made it known, and will yet make it known.'

Thereupon the crowd which stood listening declared that it had thundered; but some of them said, 'An angel had spoken to him.'

Jesus answered, 'It was for your sake, not for mine, that this utterance was made. Sentence is now being passed on this world; now is the time when the prince of this



applause. In the midst of joy he wept, not for himself, but for his people (p. 396). It was the human emotion of a Jew for the city he loved, a city with a heart harder than the stones of which it was built. By rejecting him, who alone could bring it peace, it had condemned itself to destruction. Had it accepted him, it might have been the centre of Christendom today.

### The Temple Sunday 2 April

Matthew and Luke record the cleansing of the temple immediately on our Lord's arrival there after the procession; Mark postpones it till Monday; John gives it at the paschal feast two years earlier (p. 46). I have followed Lagrange in having only one cleansing, and that at the time given by John; the synoptists record it here only because this is the first time they have Jesus at Jerusalem. Their arrangement of our Lord's discourses is also artificial; they are all put on the Tuesday; it seems more natural to divide them up over the four days. Possibly some of them belong to previous visits of our Lord to Jerusalem.

John records the incident of the Greeks; from the concluding words it must have taken place in the late afternoon. It is most fitting that these Gentiles come into the story here: just as Gentiles came at the beginning to worship the new born king (p. 20), so now they come again when he is ready to lay down his life for them. Although they are not mentioned again during our Lord's discourse, yet their presence started this train of thought. It is only by Jesus' death that the barrier (soreg, p. 288) between Jew and Gentile can be removed, and eternal life be brought to all mankind (Ephesians 2, 14). That is why Jesus' thoughts are on his death; he must die to bring his divine life to men.

The crowds that escorted him in triumph that morning are the audience; their idea of glory is entirely opposed to his; his throne is a cross. All those who wish to follow him must be prepared to follow him in the way of suffering, not by shouting hosannas. The first signs of his agony in Gethsemani break through to the surface in Jesus' dialogue with his Father. But he quickly puts aside this shrinking of his human nature from the passion; it is



world is to be cast out. Yes, if only I am lifted up from the earth, I will attract all men to myself.' (In saying this, he prophesied the death he was to die.)

The crowd answered him, 'We have been told, out of the law, that Christ is to remain undisturbed for ever; what do you mean by saying that the Son of Man must be lifted up? What Son of Man is this?'

And Jesus said to them, 'The light is among you still, but only for a short time. Finish your journey while you still have the light, for fear darkness should overtake you; he who journeys in darkness cannot tell which way he is going. While you still have the light, have faith in the light, that so you may become children of light.'

So much Jesus told them, and then, for the hour was already late, went out, with the twelve, to Bethany, where he made his lodging.

### **The Withered Fig-Tree**

When they had left Bethany next day at daybreak, he was hungry; and observing a fig-tree by the roadside with its leaves out, he went up to see if he could find anything on it. But when he reached it, he found leaves and nothing else; it was not the right season for figs. And he said to it aloud, in the hearing of his disciples: 'Let no fruit ever grow on you hereafter.'

So they came to Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple. And he taught in the temple daily. The chief priests and scribes and the leading men among the people were eager to make away with him, but they could not find any means to do it, because all the people hung upon his words.

He left the city at evening, and next morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree withered from its roots. Peter had not forgotten; 'Master,' he said, 'look at the fig-tree which you cursed; it has withered away.'



the purpose of his coming; it will be his real triumph.

The loud voice that boomed through the temple area came directly in answer to his prayer to the Father. It was not heard distinctly except by Jesus and his disciples; there would be a great deal of noise with all the people milling about the Gentiles' Court, making their purchases for the coming feast, and changing their money. Again our Lord speaks of the real nature of his Messianic triumph; a victory over sin and the devil, not a military conquest of Rome. But the crowd stubbornly cling to their picture of the king seated on his throne here in Jerusalem; Jesus seemed to be going back on his Messianic claim of that morning's procession. If he ('the Son of Man') was going to leave this earth, then he could not be the Messiah, who would reign on earth permanently. Saddened by their misunderstanding of what he has been telling them, Jesus warns them of the shortness of time left; probably the last rays of sunlight on Olivet suggested the image to him.

### Mount Olivet Monday 3 April

It was probably the house of Lazarus that provided accommodation for Jesus and his disciples each night; they often stopped at the garden of Gethsemani to rest and pray; and occasionally they passed the night there (p. 377). So as not to burden the two sisters with providing meals, he left at daybreak, and was away all day. Jesus was hungry, not so much from lack of breakfast (which was only a scanty repast of a few figs or dates) as from the burden of talking, and having little time to eat during the previous day. It is only a chance reference that tells us of his hunger, like his thirst (p. 56), and his exhaustion (p. 122). But his thoughts were not on himself; they were on Jerusalem, and his own people over whom he had wept as he came along this road the day before. They had rejected him, and so were doomed to destruction. Much of his instruction on Tuesday is given to this topic; it weighed on him more than his passion.

This strange, almost unbelievable action of Jesus (the only time he worked a miracle not from kindness of heart), was really



And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. I promise you, if you have faith, and do not hesitate, you will be able to do more than I have done over this fig-tree; I promise you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Remove, and be cast into the sea," and has no hesitation in his heart, but is sure that what he says is to come about, his wish will be granted him. I tell you, then, when you ask for anything in prayer, you have only to believe that it is yours, and it will be granted you.'

### **By What Authority?**

So they came back to Jerusalem. As he taught the people and preached to them in the temple, the chief priests and scribes, with the elders, came up and said to him, 'Tell us, what is the authority by which you do these things, and who gave you this authority?'

Jesus answered them, 'I too have a question to ask; if you can tell me the answer, I will tell you in return what is the authority by which I do these things. Whence did John's baptism come, from heaven or from men?'

Whereupon they cast about in their minds; 'If we tell him it was from heaven,' they said, 'he will ask, "Then why did you not believe him?"' And if we say it was from men, all the people will be ready to stone us; they will have it that John was a prophet.' So they answered that they could not tell whence it came.

Jesus said to them, 'And you will not learn from me what is the authority by which I do these things. But tell me what you think; there was a man who had two sons, and when he went up to the first, and said, "Away with you, my son, and work in my vineyard today," he answered, "Not I"; but he relented afterwards and went. Then he went up to the other, and said the like to him; and his answer was, "I will, Sir"; but he did not go. Which of the two carried out his father's will?'



a parable in action, familiar in the prophets (Jeremias 19 is a close parallel). He wanted to impress the finality of Israel's fate on his apostles; they would never forget the withered fig-tree, which stood for Israel (p. 242). Whenever they remembered the hosannas on Palm Sunday, they would recall this fig-tree along the road of the triumphal procession. Israel had produced no fruit; its people had shouted when they should have repented. The apostles will need faith and prayer to withstand this great calamity; that is the point of our Lord's reply (pp. 176, 266).

### The Temple Tuesday 4 April

Following the resurrection of Lazarus, about two weeks earlier, the Jewish leaders had decided that Jesus must die (p. 286). It would seem that they did not contemplate assassination, but arrest and legal condemnation by the supreme council, the Sanhedrin. But Jesus had disappeared, and they did not know where he was until he appeared again at Bethany, the Saturday before Palm Sunday. A new problem now confronted them: all day long, and probably well into the night, he was surrounded by a worshipful crowd. So they spent much time in the council chamber of the temple, planning and discussing how to arrest him. Outside, in the porches of the Gentiles' Court, Jesus continued his mission of healing and instructing, while they plotted evil within.

An imposing delegation comes out from the council chamber: 'chief priests' (Sadducees, the rulers of the temple worship), 'scribes' (Pharisees, the teachers in the synagogues, the spiritual rulers of the people), and 'elders' (the lay aristocracy, members of families of influence and power in Israel). These three classes represented the governing body of the Jews, the Sanhedrin. They are not seeking information from Jesus; he has already told them his authority came from God (p. 246). Their objective is to discredit him with the crowd, to let them see that his activities do not have the sanction of the rulers of Israel.

When our Lord replied with another question, he was following an accepted rabbinical method of discussion. He mentioned



‘The first,’ they said.

And Jesus said to them, ‘Believe me, the publicans and the harlots are further on the road to God’s kingdom than you. John came among you following all due observance, but could win no belief from you; the publicans believed him, and the harlots, but even when you saw that, you would not relent, and believe him.’

### **Parable of the Unfaithful Vine-Dressers**

And now he took occasion to tell the people this parable: ‘There was a rich man who planted a vineyard; he walled it in, and dug a wine-press and built a tower in it, and then let it out to some vine-dressers, while he went away to spend a long time abroad. When vintage-time drew near, he sent one of his servants on an errand to the vine-dressers, bidding them pay him his share of the vineyard’s revenues. Whereupon they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant on a second errand to them, and him too they beat over the head and used him outrageously. Then he sent a third, and they drove him away wounded, like the others; and many others, whom they beat or killed at their pleasure.

‘So the owner of the vineyard said, “What am I to do?” He had still one messenger left, his own well-beloved son; him he sent to them last of all; “They will have reverence,” he said, “for my son.”

‘But the vine-dressers, on seeing him, debated thus among themselves; “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, so that his inheritance may pass into our hands.” And they laid hands on him, thrust him out from the vineyard, and killed him.

‘And now, what will the owner of the vineyard do to those vine-dressers when he returns? He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will let out the vineyard



John the Baptist, because these same leaders had asked John that very question (p. 38). If they had acknowledged John, then they would have accepted Jesus (p. 102). The short parable is concerned with the relations of sinners ('the first') and the leaders ('the other') with John, that strict observer of the law ('following all due observance'). In theory the Pharisees should have welcomed John; after all, the law was their profession.

Before the delegation could withdraw, our Lord began a second parable. It is closely linked with the preceding by the vineyard theme; there he had concentrated their attention on John the Baptist, now he drew attention to his own person. On Israel's attitude to him, their fate depended. The Sanhedrin had thought to destroy his reputation with the crowd; he has taken the offensive instead, and will discredit them with the people.

Our Lord has already spoken a parable about a vineyard (p. 278); here he describes the characteristic qualities of a Judean vineyard. Judea is a land of rocky hills. First of all the stones have to be cleared; they are stacked up on the borders of the vineyard to make a fence ('he walled it in'). A portion of the solid rock is cut back until it becomes a level platform; on it the grapes will be trodden out to yield their juice for wine, which runs into vats hollowed out of the same rock ('dug a wine-press'). Finally a rough shelter of stones is built in the centre of the vineyard; someone is on watch there day and night to guard the grapes against thieves and jackals ('built a tower'). The vines take about three years to produce fruit; the care of them and the harvesting is often done on a share-farming system, the tenant-farmer paying a third of his crop to the owner (p. 263).

This is the plainest of all our Lord's parables; no need for the audience to wait for the end of the story to know what it was all about. He began his description in words almost identical with the prophet Isaias' classical image (Isaias 5, 1-7); and there the vineyard was the house of Israel, the Lord's inheritance. But



to other vine-dressers, who will pay him his due when the season comes.'

'God forbid,' they said, when they heard that.

But he fastened his eyes on them, and said, 'Why then, what is the meaning of those words in the scriptures, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the chief stone at the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"? If ever a man falls against that stone, he will break his bones; if it falls upon him, it will grind him to powder. I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a people which yields the revenues that belong to it.'

The chief priests and the Pharisees saw clearly, when they heard this parable, that it was of themselves he was speaking, and would gladly have laid hands on him there and then, but they were afraid of the people, who looked upon him as a prophet.

### **Parable of the Marriage Feast**

And Jesus once more spoke to them in parables: 'Here is an image,' he said, 'of the kingdom of heaven; there was once a king, who held a marriage-feast for his son, and sent out his servants with a summons to all those whom he had invited to the wedding; but they would not come.

"Then he sent other servants with a fresh summons, bidding them tell those who had been invited, "By this, I have prepared my feast, the oxen have been killed, and the fatlings, all is ready now; come to the wedding." But still they paid no heed, and went off on other errands, one to his farm in the country, and another to his trading; and the rest laid hands upon his servants, and insulted and killed them. The king fell into a rage when he heard of it, and sent out his troops to put those murderers to death, and burn their city.

'After this, he said to his servants, "Here is the marriage-feast all ready, and those who had been invited have



instead of speaking of the vineyard, our Lord spoke of the vine-dressers; undoubtedly these were the leaders of Israel assembled about him. Jesus emphasized God's patient toleration of their ill treatment of all his prophets from Moses onwards. He would give them just one more chance; it was all that was left to him; he would send his only Son, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. But now, when the Son is standing before them, they are plotting to kill him. There was no need to explain the parable; it described that very situation in the temple.

A voice from the crowd showed that all understood. But surely God would not abandon Israel. With a look of pity and love ('he fastened his eyes on them') Jesus turns to the crowd. With a sudden change of thought, probably suggested by the building operations going on in the temple, he rivets their thoughts on himself: he, the final stone in God's building, has been rejected by the leaders. This means their destruction. The people must now make their choice; if they reject him, they too will be abandoned by God.

That our Lord could tell three parables and hold the crowd spellbound, while his adversaries shifted uneasily from one foot to another, is proof enough of his personality and the absorbing interest in every word he spoke. He must have had a strong voice to speak at such length and to be heard above the noises of people coming and going about the temple courts. He was speaking probably in the southern part of the temple, the Royal Porch, where he could point out the great corner stone on the south-east wall, the pinnacle of the temple (p. 36).

In the parable of the vine-dressers, Jesus singled out the leaders; but even there he warned the nation that it would share their fate unless it accepted him. In this parable he develops the national theme in traditional imagery of Messianic times, a banquet (for an almost identical parable, see p. 254). The parable of the vine-dressers was adapted to the present situation; this parable visualizes the future, when the universal church will replace the Jewish nation. For all practical purposes 70 A.D. was



proved unworthy of it. You must go out to the street corners, and invite all whom you find there to the wedding." And his servants went out into the streets, where they mustered all they could find, rogues and honest men together; and so the wedding had its full tale of guests.

'But when the king came in to look at the company, he saw a man there who had no wedding-garment on; "My friend," he said, "how did you come to be here without a wedding-garment?"

'And he made no reply.

'Whereupon the king said to his servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness, where there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

'Many are called, but few are chosen.'

### **The Question of Tribute to Caesar**

After this the Pharisees withdrew, and plotted together, to make him betray himself in his talk. And so, watching for their opportunity, they sent agents of their own (with those who were of Herod's party), who pretended to be men of honest purpose, to fasten on his words; then they would hand him over to the supreme authority of the governor.

These put a question to him; 'Master,' they said, 'we know well that you are sincere, and teach in all sincerity the way of God; that you hold no one in awe, making no distinction between man and man; tell us, then, is it right to pay tribute to Caesar, or not? Should we pay it, or should we refuse to pay it?'

Jesus saw their malice; 'Hypocrites,' he said, 'why do you thus put me to the test? Show me the coinage in which the tribute is paid.'

So they brought him a silver piece, and he asked them, 'Whose is this likeness? Whose name is inscribed on it?'

'Caesar's,' they said.



the date in history when the fate of Israel was definitely settled. In that year Jerusalem, with its temple, was burned to the ground ('burn their city'). In point of fact many Gentiles had entered before (St. Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, died three years before the fall of Jerusalem); but our Lord here dramatically pictures their entry only after Israel has ceased to exist.

The final sentence is a proverbial saying, summing up the two false Jewish ideas of the kingdom, against which the parable is directed. 'Many'—not all the saved will be Jews; there will be Gentiles too. 'Few'—not all the Jews will be saved; there are other requirements besides race; the wedding-garment of sanctifying grace is essential for salvation. It is probably to warn Judas that our Lord pictures only one man without a wedding-garment; Jesus also addresses Judas as 'my friend' in the garden (p. 376).

The defeated and humiliated delegation withdrew to the council chamber; their attempt to discredit Jesus with the crowd had backfired (p. 308). Their thoughts went now to the Roman garrison in fortress Antonia; Pilate would not worry about the feelings of the crowd, if there was any suspicion of revolutionary talk. The demonstration on Palm Sunday showed clearly that Jesus had Messianic ambitions. They would make it a national issue. How could the Messiah tolerate submission to a foreign power? This time they would be more subtle; the question would come as a case of conscience from a member of the crowd; they knew Jesus was always sympathetic to a sincere enquirer.

The Judeans paid taxes to Rome, the Galileans to Herod, a Jewish prince. A Galilean rabbi would not be familiar with the principle on which the Judeans squared their consciences: since Roman rule permitted public worship of Yahweh, it did not deny his sovereignty over Israel. Jesus' request for a coin was a vivid psychological touch; by producing the denarius, they answered their own question. This standard silver coin was minted only by Rome; it was Caesar's property. Since Jewish law forbade



Whereupon he answered, 'Why then, give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

And they said no more; they were full of admiration at his answer, finding no means of discrediting his words in the eyes of the people.

### **The Woman with Seven Husbands**

On that day, too, he was approached with a question by the Sadducees, men who say that there is no resurrection; 'Master,' they said, 'Moses prescribed for us, "If a man has a married brother who dies without issue, the surviving brother must marry the widow, and beget children in the dead brother's name."' There were seven brethren, the first of whom married a wife, and died without issue. So the next took her, and also died without issue, then the third, and so with all the seven; they left no children when they died, and the woman herself died last of all. And now, when the dead rise again, which of these will be her husband, since she was wife to all seven?'

Jesus answered them, 'Is not this where you are wrong, that you do not understand the scriptures, or what is the power of God? The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but those who are found worthy to attain that other world, and resurrection from the dead, take neither wife nor husband; mortal no longer, they will be as the angels in heaven are, children of God, now that the resurrection has given them birth.

'But as for the dead rising again, have you never read in the book of Moses how God spoke to him at the burning bush, and said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? It is of living men, not of dead men, that he is the God; for him, all men are alive. You are wrong, then, altogether.'

This the crowds heard, and were amazed by his teaching.



them to give it to God (because of the image on it), there was no alternative but to give it back to its owner (Romans 13, 1-7). But the real emphasis in Jesus' words is on 'give back to God, what is God's.' These men plotting his death are made in the likeness of God; their whole being belongs to him. Their first tribute should be obedience to him.

### **The Temple Tuesday 4 April**

According to Jewish ideas, the dead lived on in Sheol, an inert shadowy existence. At the beginning of the Messianic era, they would rise up from their prison and come back on earth again to take their places in the kingdom. This new resurrected life was pictured as a continuation of the life they lived before death (like Lazarus coming back from the dead). At least that was the general belief of the people, and the teaching of the Pharisees. The Sadducees ridiculed belief in the resurrection (Acts 23, 8), and greatly embarrassed the Pharisees by proposing grotesque situations in the resurrected life; they regarded this case as unanswerable. They would make this Messianic pretender look ridiculous; laughter and scorn would alienate the crowd.

First our Lord patiently corrects their false ideas on the nature of life after the resurrection: this new birth will make men immortal. Marriage and reproduction will be unnecessary once death has been destroyed; they will be totally occupied with God, as the angels now are (it is from this passage that chastity is called the angelic virtue). Here our Lord gives only sufficient to refute the Sadducees; for more detail see 1 Cor. 15, 35-49.

Our Lord, never content with merely answering an objection, now gives his adversaries a proof from scripture of the fact of the resurrection. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for 500 years when God spoke to Moses. Imagine a God of corpses and dead bones! These holy men must be living still. But their present existence in Sheol is only darkness and gloom (Job 10, 21-22); it could not be called real life. For a Jew, life meant living on this earth; and to do that the dead must rise from their graves.



## The Greatest Commandment

And now the Pharisees, hearing how he had put the Sadducees to silence, gathered about him. One of the scribes, a lawyer, who had heard their dispute, finding that he answered to the purpose, put a question to try him: 'Master, which commandment in the law is the greatest and the first of all?'

Jesus answered him, 'The first is, "Listen, Israel; there is no God but the Lord your God; and you shall love the Lord your God with the love of your whole heart, and your whole soul, and your whole mind, and your whole strength." This is the greatest of the commandments, and the first. And the second, its like, is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these; on these two commandments, all the law and the prophets depend.'

And the scribe said to him, 'Truly, Master, you have answered well; there is but one, and no other beside him: and to love him with the love of the whole heart, and the whole understanding, and the whole strength, is a greater thing than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

Then Jesus, seeing how wisely he had answered, said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'

Then, while the Pharisees were still gathered about him, Jesus asked them: 'What is your opinion concerning Christ? Whose son is he to be?'

They told him, 'David's.'

'How is it then,' said he, 'that David is moved by the Holy Spirit to call him Master, when he says: "The Lord said to my Master, Sit on my right hand while I make your enemies a footstool under your feet"? David calls Christ his Master; how can he be also his son?'

None could find a word to say in answer to him, nor did anyone dare, after that day, to try him with further questions.



It was a welcome change for the Pharisees to have Jesus on their side, not against them. They felt elated at his masterly reply to the difficult objection of the Sadducees; they themselves never had been able to give a satisfactory explanation to their opponents, and felt ill at ease whenever this question was raised. It was in no spirit of animosity that they now gathered about Jesus; probably the leaders had retired once more to the council chamber; those now about Jesus were more like disciples paying homage to their champion. In this atmosphere one of them asked for the Master's opinion on the relative importance of the 613 commandments of the Mosaic law (p. 85). Was the sabbath the most important? Or circumcision? How about the bird-nesting law? (Deut. 22, 6-7).

To the fantastic, arithmetical spirituality of the Pharisees, Jesus opposes divine simplicity: his own total, complete love of the Father, and the dedication of his whole life to the salvation of mankind, must be the essential in all lives, just as they are in his. He joins the love of God and neighbour, as the characteristic of his kingdom (Romans 13, 9). Both principles are found in the Mosaic law, but separate; at Bethany, five months before, a Pharisee joined these two texts (p. 220), just as Jesus does here. It seems more likely that our Lord had been the first to do so, and that the Pharisee was only quoting from Jesus' well-known teaching.

Jesus takes advantage of this friendly atmosphere, and the good dispositions of some of the Pharisees; he wants to save their souls, not worst them in argument. He takes the initiative in order to make them think, to admit his true nature, to understand the Messiah as he really is, not as they wished him to be (p. 246). Psalm 109 was the best known of the Messianic psalms (p. 434); in it David addresses his own descendant as his superior. 'Son' implies inferiority; 'Master' indicates one of higher rank (in this case, God). It was not just an exaggerated form of speech on the part of king David; he spoke under divine inspiration ('by the Holy Spirit'). Rather than follow up our Lord's line of thought, they take refuge in silence and close their minds to the truth.



### **Pride and Hypocrisy of the Pharisees**

Still teaching in the temple, Jesus addressed himself to the people at large, who listened to him readily, and to his disciples; 'The scribes and Pharisees,' he said, 'have established themselves in the place from which Moses used to teach; do what they tell you, then, continue to observe what they tell you, but do not imitate their actions, for they tell you one thing and do another. They fasten up packs too heavy to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; they themselves will not stir a finger to lift them. They act, always, so as to be a mark for men's eyes. Boldly written are the texts they carry, and deep is the hem of their garments; their heart is set on taking the chief places at table and the first seats in the synagogue, and having their hands kissed in the market-place, and being called Rabbi among their fellow-men. They swallow up the property of widows, under cover of their long prayers; their sentence will be all the heavier for that.

'You are not to claim the title of Rabbi; you have but one Master, and you are all brethren alike. Nor are you to call any man on earth your father; you have but one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called teachers; you have one teacher, Christ. Among you, the greatest of all is to be the servant of all; the man who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted.

### **Our Lord's Seven Woes**

'Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in men's faces; you will neither enter yourselves, nor let others enter when they would.

'Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that encompass sea and land to gain a single proselyte, and



Our Lord has silenced his adversaries by his logic and reasoned exposition of his doctrine. But he takes no personal pleasure in his victory over men that have been defeated, not converted. He is not thinking of himself; his heart goes out to this misguided people. Without any vindictiveness he sadly warns them of the falsity of their spiritual leaders, pitiful caricatures of holiness. Since the people are dependent on the scribes and Pharisees for knowledge of the Mosaic law, they must listen to them when they expound the law itself, but not when they add their own burdensome interpretations and additions ('packs too heavy to be borne'). But most of all they must beware of imitating the vain, ostentatious show of piety so characteristic of the Pharisees (pp. 92-94). The texts of scripture worn in small boxes on hands and forehead (a false interpretation of Deut. 6, 8-9, in a literal instead of metaphorical sense), the long tassels on the hem of their cloaks (p. 127) were only externals. While they were engaged in seemingly holy occupations, their thoughts were on how to rob defenceless widows, with whose interests they were especially charged.

Our Lord turns to his disciples, who were to replace these rabbis as teachers in his kingdom. They must not seek personal glory, like the Pharisees; they must recognize that all their authority comes from God the Father; they must teach only in the name of Christ. They must be humble, not desiring titles of honour and tokens of reverence (p. 266); since the dominion belongs to God, they must give the glory to him.

This is our Lord's final discourse in the temple. He is severe and unrelenting in his castigation of the Pharisees; they were the religious leaders of the people; their false religious spirit was responsible for the moral ruin of the nation. He is determined that no such pharisaical spirit shall have any influence on the religious life of his kingdom; that is why he exposes the evil of it in such forceful language. It is an attack not on persons but on the errors they are teaching. Our Lord is clear and penetrating in



then make the proselyte twice as worthy of damnation as yourselves.

‘Woe upon you, blind leaders, who say, “If a man swears by the sanctuary, it goes for nothing; if he swears by the gold in the sanctuary, his oath stands.” Blind fools, which is greater, the gold, or the sanctuary that consecrates the gold? And again, “If a man swears by the altar it goes for nothing; if he swears by the gift on the altar, his oath stands.” Blind fools, which is greater, the gift, or the altar that consecrates the gift? The man who swears by the altar swears at the same time by all that is on it. The man who swears by the sanctuary swears at the same time by him who has made it his dwelling-place. And the man who swears by heaven swears not only by God’s throne, but by him who sits upon it.

‘Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that will award to God his tithe, though it be of mint or dill or cummin, and have forgotten the weightier commandments of the law, justice, mercy, and honour; you did ill to forget one duty while you performed the other; you blind leaders, that have a strainer for the gnat, and then swallow the camel!

‘Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that scour the outward part of cup and dish, while all within is running with avarice and incontinence. Scour the inside of cup and dish first, you blind Pharisees, that so the outside, too, may become clean.

‘Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that are like whitened sepulchres, fair in outward show, when they are full of dead men’s bones and all manner of corruption within; you too seem exact over your duties, outwardly, to men’s eyes, while there is nothing within but hypocrisy and iniquity.

‘Woe upon you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites that build up the tombs of the prophets and engrave the monuments of the just; “If we had lived in our fathers’



his observations; his words are full of vivid, topical details from actual everyday life.

These seven 'woes' are found only in St. Matthew. A similar six 'woes' are given by St. Luke five months earlier (p. 230); though substantially the same, they differ both in order and wording. The imagery of the first woe is that of a building, the church on a rock (p. 168); the keys have been taken away from the Pharisees and handed over to Peter. What use was there in making converts of Gentiles ('proselytes'), not for the kingdom, which they have rejected, but for hell? This seeming zeal for God's cause was really only a desire for personal glory; they were looking for praise from men; the salvation of souls was not the aim of these proud convert-makers. Just how they made a mockery of the Lord God himself, and confused the people by subtle quibbling, is evident from their teaching on oaths and vows (third woe). Our Lord earlier rebuked the pharisaic practice of oaths, in the Sermon on the Mount (p. 90). Instead of instructing the people on the seriousness of solemn promises made to God, on the sanctity of altar and sanctuary, and reverence for God and his dwelling-place, they quibbled and distinguished about circumstances and formulas. Oaths became a means of escaping obligations under the cloak of religion (p. 158).

Ten per cent ('tithe') of the produce of the land was paid in annually for the support of the Levites. With a show of exactitude for the most minute prescription of the law, the Pharisees paid tithes on plants used as spices and seasoning; the ordinary people were content to pay their dues on the staple foods, wheat, wine, and oil. But the Pharisees did this only for their own glory, instead of through justice to God's priests, mercy to the poor who shared these tithes, and honour to God himself. There is a play on words in 'gnat' (kalama) and 'camel' (gamala).

The fifth woe on ablutions is treated more fully in an incident at Capharnaum (pp. 158-160); outward observance is valueless without interior holiness. The sixth woe has the same lesson. It is a real gem, a perfect description that has become proverbial. It



times," you say, "we would not have taken part in murdering the prophets." Why then, you bear witness of your own ancestry; it was your fathers who slaughtered the prophets; it is for you to complete your fathers' reckoning. Serpents that you are, brood of vipers, how should you escape from the award of hell? And now, behold, the wisdom of God warns you, I am sending prophets and wise men and men of learning to preach to you; some of them you will put to death and crucify, some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; so that you will make yourselves answerable for all the blood of just men that is shed on the earth, from the blood of the just Abel to the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachias, whom you slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Believe me, this generation shall be held answerable for all of it.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, still murdering the prophets, and stoning the messengers that are sent to you, how often have I been ready to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings; and you refused it! Behold, your house is left to you, a house uninhabited. Believe me, you shall see nothing of me henceforward, until the time when you will be saying, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." '

So much Jesus told them, and then went away, and was lost to their view.

### **Reflections of John the Evangelist**

Such great miracles he did in their presence, and still they did not believe in him; this was in fulfilment of the words spoken by the prophet Isaias, 'Lord, is there anyone who has believed our message, to whom the power of God has been made known?' So it was that they could not believe; and indeed, Isaias has said elsewhere: 'He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, so that they



had topical interest since sepulchres were given a new coat of white before the paschal feast. The seventh woe continues the same theme of tombs. It is the climax, and brings out the nature of 'woe': not only a reproach for evil, but grief and lamentation over approaching calamity. Despite their signs of reverence for God's messengers of former times ('prophets, just'), the present leaders are about to complete the reckoning of their ancestors' blood-guilt by the murder of God's last messenger, his only Son (p. 310); they are true sons of their fathers. Abel is the first man murdered (Genesis 4, 10), Zacharias the last (2 Paralipomena 24, 20-23), in the Hebrew Bible; the murder of the latter was just as infamous as that of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury cathedral. They are typical of blood crying to heaven for vengeance.

Our Lord is addressing the nation, no longer the Pharisees only, from the words, 'And now, behold . . .' These touching words to Jerusalem are reminiscent of his weeping on Palm Sunday (p. 302). His love for the wayward children of this city is as deep and tender as a mother's; it is expressed with simplicity under the homely picture of a hen and her chickens. 'A hen,' says St. Augustine, 'is different from all other birds; her motherliness is apparent, even when her chickens are not following her.' It was the same love speaking through the seven 'woes': a last appeal to repent before they were disowned by God, and he left his house forever (it is 'your house,' not God's any longer). It is on our Lord's solemn concluding words that St. Paul bases his statement of the final conversion of the Jewish nation (Romans 11, 25-26).

### A Summary of Our Lord's Life

This is St. John's reflection on the unbelief of the Jews; he is looking back in old age, about sixty years after the event (for similar reflections, see pp. 50, 52). Almost the whole world has accepted Christ, yet the Jews, who witnessed so many mighty miracles (thirty are recorded in the gospels, seven in St. John) rejected Jesus. This same problem of the unbelief of the Jews also exercised St. Paul's mind (Romans 9-11). Both he and John



could not see with those eyes, and understand with that heart, and turn back to me, and win healing from me.' Isaias said this, as one who had seen his glory; it was of him that he spoke. There were, for all that, many of the rulers who had learned to believe in him; but they would not profess it because of the Pharisees, afraid of being forbidden the synagogue. They valued their credit with men higher than their credit with God.

And Jesus cried out, 'If a man believes in me, it is in him who sent me, not in me, that he believes; to see me is to see him who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that all those who believe in me may continue no longer in darkness. If a man hears my words, and does not keep true to them, I do not pass sentence on him; I have come to save the world, not to pass sentence on the world. The man who makes me of no account, and does not accept my words, has a judge appointed to try him; it is the message I have uttered that will be his judge at the last day. And this, because it is not on my own authority that I have spoken; it was my Father who sent me that commanded me what words I was to say, what message I was to utter. And I know well that what he commands is eternal life; everything then, which I utter, I utter as my Father has bidden me.'

### The Widow's Mite

As he was sitting opposite the treasury of the temple, Jesus watched the crowd throwing coins into the treasury, the many rich with their many offerings; and there was one poor widow, who came and put in two mites, which make a farthing. Thereupon he called his disciples to him, and said to them, 'Believe me, this poor widow has put in more than all those others who have put offerings into the treasury. The others all made an offering to God out of what they had to spare; she, with so little to give, put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'



**appeal to Old Testament prophecy: Jesus' mission was not a failure; he had carried out the divine plan; God himself had decreed the blindness and hardness of Israel. This he did, not because he wanted Israel to reject his Son, but because he knew that the Pharisees would shut their eyes to the light; and fear of them would hold back many from acknowledging the truth. It was not without reason that Jesus spoke the seven 'woes.'**

**Our Lord is presented as obeying God's command to proclaim his message, like a prophet of old; his fearless teaching is contrasted with the silence of the timid believers. His words given here are not a new discourse delivered there and then in the temple; they are rather a selection of the essentials of his teaching, summarized here by St. John. He completely satisfies man's search for truth; he is light, dissipating the darkness of error, to all those who find faith in him. But man has a will as well as an intellect; he must put into practice the teachings of Christ. If he rejects Christ, sentence of condemnation will be passed on him at the last day; if he accepts him, then Christ will completely satisfy his desire for life; he will bestow eternal life on him. Jesus is truth and life because he is God; he does not act independently of the Father; they are united in all their actions. This distinction of Persons has always been emphasized by our Lord (pp. 152-154); it is the secret to understanding the divinity of Christ, the great obstacle for the Jews.**

### **The Temple Tuesday 4 April**

**The crowd dispersed after our Lord's touching words of farewell to Jerusalem (p. 324). He walked, with his apostles, towards the Golden Gate; there he turned and entered the Women's Court; from the Nicanor Gate he could see the altar of burnt-offerings, and the sanctuary where God dwelt among his people (this scene recalls Jesus' first appearance in his Father's house, pp. 18-20). Although he was tired, he would not miss an opportunity of instructing his disciples: God wants men, not their money. The religious value of an act is in the intention; it is internal, not external. The only gift that pleases God is the heart.**



## The Question of the End of the World

As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Master, what stones! What a fabric!'

Jesus answered him, 'Do you see all this huge fabric? There will not be a stone of it left on another; it will all be thrown down.'

So, when he was sitting down on mount Olivet, opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him, now that they were alone: 'Tell us, when will this be? And what sign will be given of your coming, and of the world being brought to an end?'

Jesus answered them, 'Take care that you do not allow anyone to deceive you. Many will come making use of my name; they will say, "Here I am, the time is close at hand"; do not turn aside after them. And when you hear of wars and revolts, do not be alarmed by it; such things must happen first, but the end will not come all at once.'

Then he told them, 'Nation will rise in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes in this region or that, and plagues and famines; and sights of terror and great portents from heaven; but all this is but the beginning of travail.

'Before all this, men will be laying hands on you and persecuting you; they will give you up to the synagogues, and to prison, and drag you into the presence of kings and governors on my account; that will be your opportunity for making the truth known. This gospel of the kingdom must first be preached all over the world, so that all nations may hear the truth; only after that will the end come. Brother will be given up to death by brother, and the son by his father; children will rise up against their parents, and will compass their deaths; all the world will be hating you because you bear my name; and yet no hair of your head shall perish. Whereupon many will lose heart, will betray and hate one another. Many false



**Mount Olivet Tuesday 4 April**

The magnificence and grandeur of the temple buildings, the large white stones of the walls, the tall forty-foot columns of the porches, the gold of the sanctuary gleaming in the rays of the setting sun, brought an involuntary cry of admiration from one of the apostles, as they passed through the Golden Gate. Our Lord was not insensitive to the majesty and beauty of the scene; but he was saddened by these words of one of his apostles (probably Peter); they had not yet understood the significance of his farewell that afternoon (p. 324). He must not leave them under a false impression: Jerusalem was doomed to complete and irrevocable destruction. Bewildered and silent they walked across the Kedron valley; past the garden of Gethsemani, to the summit of mount Olivet; here Jesus stopped for a rest. It was at this same place he had paused, and wept over Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (p. 302).

The apostles kept on towards Bethany. When Jesus did not follow, four of them came back; they found him sitting there, his eyes fixed on Jerusalem. It was probably Peter again that ventured to ask him the question uppermost in all their minds: When? How soon will this calamity take place? (They do not mention 'temple' or 'Jerusalem,' but that is obviously what they are thinking of.) To this first question they join a second: What will the sign be? Will there be any warning, any clues to watch for? But this time it is not only Jerusalem they are thinking of; it is the end of the world, the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time (the technical word is Parousia, 'Coming'). There could be no possibility of the world going on without Jerusalem; it was the symbol and centre of the kingdom of God.

In actual fact the destruction of Jerusalem was just forty years off; the end of the world has yet to come. But at this stage, our Lord makes no attempt to distinguish the two events that the apostles linked together. He himself had spoken only of Jerusalem, and throughout this paragraph his teaching is restricted to that topic. He warns them against listening to predictions of his coming; nor are they to wait in terror for miraculous deliver-



prophets will arise, and many will be deceived by them; and the charity of most men will grow cold, as they see wickedness abound everywhere; but that man will be saved who endures to the last. It is by endurance that you will secure possession of your souls. Only, if they persecute you in one city, take refuge in another; I promise you, the Son of Man will come before your task with the cities of Israel is ended.

### **The Destruction of Jerusalem**

‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, that which the prophet Daniel called the abomination of desolation’ (let him who reads this, recognize what it means), ‘be sure that the time has come when she will be laid waste. Then those who are in Judea must take refuge in the mountains, those who are in the city itself withdrawing from it, and those who are in the countryside not making their way into it; not going down to carry anything from the house, if they are on the housetop; not going back to pick up a cloak, if they are in the fields. Remember Lot’s wife. These will be days of vengeance, bringing fulfilment of all that has been written. It will go hard with women who are with child, or have children at the breast, in those days; and you must pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on the sabbath day; it will be a time of bitter distress all over the land, and retribution against this people. They will be put to the sword, and led away into captivity all over the world; and Jerusalem will be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles, until the time granted to the Gentile nations has run out.

‘For those will be days of distress, such as has not been since the beginning of creation till now, and can never be again. There would have been no hope left for any human creature, if the Lord had not cut those days short; but he has cut the days short for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen. At such a time, if a man tells you,



ance when world-shattering calamities happen. They have work to do: they are to go out and convert the world (p. 424). Persecution is to be their lot, as he has told them often (pp. 86, 134, 324, 362); it is in carrying out this mission, and patiently enduring all hate and opposition, that they will win salvation. ('The Son of Man will come—all this—the time—the end' refer, not to the Second Coming, but that particular act of divine judgment, the destruction of Jerusalem.)

Our Lord did not wish the Christians to be engulfed in the destruction of Jerusalem. Here he gave them a definite, positive sign to watch for: when the Roman army began to move in on that city, its end had come; that holy place would soon be desecrated by the heathen. It would be dangerous for Christians to discuss the Roman part too openly; the authorities might easily take that as subversive talk. So our Lord gave them a scriptural phrase used by Daniel to describe a previous desecration in Machabean times; it was *Shigz Shomem* ('the abomination of desolation'); it became a kind of secret password among the Christians.

Quite clearly our Lord here distinguishes the fall of Jerusalem from the end of the world. Christians could, and should escape from it by flight; but at the end of the world there would be no possibility of escape; that would be a universal cataclysm (p. 268). They are told to go at once; they must not waste time in preparing for the journey; they must go outside the Holy Land, to the mountains east of the Jordan (actually most of them went to Pella). Sadness filled the heart of Christ at the thought of such misery and hardship; that is why he urged his followers to pray that God's just judgment be tempered with mercy. At least part of this prayer was answered; it was springtime (April 70 A.D.) not winter when the Roman army besieged Jerusalem.

Some authors think that a new scene begins at 'for those will be days of distress'; that our Lord is speaking now of the end of the world. But Josephus uses almost identical language in describing the Jewish war, which began in 66, and finished with the fall of



"See, here is Christ," or "See, he is there," do not believe him. There will be false Christs and false prophets who will rise up and show great signs and wonders, so that, if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived. But you must be on your guard; hereby, I have given you warning of it all.

### **Biblical Imagery of Divine Intervention**

'In those days, after this distress, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will refuse her light, and the stars will fall from heaven; and on earth the nations will be in distress, bewildered by the roaring of the sea and of its waves; men's hearts will be dried up with fear, as they await the troubles that are overtaking the whole world; the very powers of heaven will rock. And then the sign of the Son of Man will be seen in heaven; then it is that all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory; and he will send out his messengers with a loud blast of the trumpet, to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

'When all this begins, look up, and lift up your heads; it means that the time draws near for your deliverance. The fig-tree will teach you a parable; when its branch grows supple, and begins to put out leaves, you know by your own experience that summer is near. Just so, when you see this happen, be sure that the kingdom of God is close at hand, at your very doors. Believe me, this generation will not have passed, before all this is accomplished. Though heaven and earth should pass away, my words will stand.

### **A Warning to Be Watchful**

'But as for that day and that hour you speak of, they are known to nobody, not even to the angels in heaven, not even to the Son; only the Father knows them. Look well



Jerusalem in 70 A.D. It would seem that our Lord is merely repeating his warning against false Christs, and terrifying happenings, with which he began this discourse. Here he is emphasizing his concern for members of his kingdom ('the elect'). In his divine mercy he has shortened the time of trial; it will be only a matter of forty years till the kingdom is victorious.

This paragraph is usually understood to refer to the Second Coming of Christ. Similar language is used of the end of the world in other parts of the New Testament (1 and 2 Thess., 1 Cor. 15, 2 Peter, Apocalypse). But these passages, like our Lord's language here, are borrowed from the traditional imagery of the Old Testament (Isaias, Daniel, Zacharias). At the Jewish trial (p. 384), Jesus uses the same imagery (Daniel) to indicate the worship soon to be paid him as God, once his kingdom triumphs (pp. 170, 276); he is not speaking there of the end of the world.

Isaias uses the imagery of sun, moon, and stars for the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Our Lord too is speaking of the fall of the same city, Jerusalem, in 70 A.D. From one point of view it is a great disaster; that is why there is so much anguish; all creation is in mourning. (The period preceding the fall of Jerusalem is full of terrifying portents. See Josephus and Tacitus.) But it is also the end of the winter of trial; summer has come for the kingdom of God, and speedily too, in 'this generation.' The fall of Jerusalem marks the victory of Christianity over its first enemy, Judaism; the church is now definitely established. The Son of Man has come into his own; the cross ('the sign of the Son of Man') is now a symbol of victory and honour, not of defeat and shame. Gentiles flock into the church from the four quarters of the world, as though summoned by the blast of a trumpet.

Our Lord now considers the second question asked by his apostles: the time and the sign of the Parousia (p. 328). There is a noticeable difference in terminology. He has spoken of the



to it, watch; you do not know when the time is to come. Do not let your hearts grow dull with revelry and drunkenness and the affairs of this life, so that that day overtakes you unawares; it will come like the springing of a trap on all those who dwell upon the face of the earth. Keep watch, then, praying at all times, so that you may be found worthy to come safe through all that lies before you, and stand erect to meet the presence of the Son of man. It is as if a man going on his travels had left his house, entrusting authority to his servants, each of them to do his own work, and enjoining the door-keeper to watch. Be on the watch, then, since you do not know when the master of the house is coming, at twilight, or midnight, or cockcrow, or dawn; if not, he may come suddenly, and find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to all, Watch.

### Parables of the Ten Virgins

‘When that day comes, the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins, who went out to meet the bridegroom, taking their lamps with them. Five of these were foolish, and five were wise; the five foolish, when they took their lamps, did not provide themselves with oil, but those who were wise took oil in the vessels they carried, as well as the lamps. The bridegroom was long in coming, so that they all grew drowsy, and feel asleep.

‘And at midnight the cry was raised, “Behold, the bridegroom is on his way; go out to meet him.”

‘Thereupon all these virgins awoke, and fell to trimming their lamps; and now the foolish ones said to the wise, “Share your oil with us, our lamps are burning low.”

‘But the wise ones answered, “How if there is not enough for us and you? Better that you should find your way to the merchants, and buy for yourselves.”



period preceding the fall of Jerusalem as 'the time . . . the end . . . those days . . . all this . . . this generation.' They are general, and rather vague, terms for the forty years from 30 to 70 A.D. When he speaks of the end of the world, it is 'that day'—the great final day of judgment. But he will not give the faintest clue as to time; it is a strict secret, and not part of his mission to communicate. (God the Son knows the time; but Jesus speaks of it as known only to the Father, meaning, God hidden and inaccessible, as John 1, 18.) They must be on their toes, always ready (pp. 238-240).

The Shigz Shomen would be the sign that Jerusalem was about to fall; there will be no sign at all when Jesus comes to judge the world; men will be going about their daily occupations without the least suspicion that the day has come. The destruction of Jerusalem would be a particular disaster from which they could escape by going somewhere else; the end of the world will be universal; from it there is no escape (pp. 268-270).

### **Bethany Tuesday 4 April**

Our Lord has just stressed the need of vigilance, to be ready for his unexpected return. He will now engrave it on their minds by this parable, which bears resemblance to a previous parable on the same subject (p. 238). But instead of 'men awaiting their master's return,' he has bridesmaids; a detail suggesting that he is back at Bethany, and accommodating his teaching to Martha and Mary. He would hardly keep his hosts waiting long, once the disciples had announced his approach. Possibly part of his teaching on the destruction of Jerusalem was given at Bethany; this would account for repetitions in the discourse as it now stands.

In the parable, the bridesmaids (ten was the usual number) went to the bride's house, where the ceremony was to be held. There they would wait in readiness until word was given that the bridegroom was 'on his way.' At some point between the two houses they would join his retinue for the formal entry. Since weddings were always at night, lamps were essential; a bridesmaid



‘And so, while they were away buying it, the bridegroom came; those who stood ready escorted him to the wedding, and the door was shut.

‘Afterwards those other virgins came, with the cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.”

‘And he answered, “Believe me, I do not recognize you.”

‘Be on the watch, then; the day of it and the hour of it are unknown to you.

### **Parable of the Talents**

‘So it was with a man who went on his travels; he called his trusted servants to him and committed his money to their charge. He gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to another, according to their several abilities, and with that he set out on his journey. The man who had received five talents went and traded with them, until he had made a profit of five talents more; and in the same way he who had received two made a profit of two. Whereas he who had received but one went off and made a hole in the ground, and there hid his master’s money.

‘Long afterwards, the master of those servants came back, and entered into a reckoning with them. And so the man who had received five talents came forward and brought him five talents more; “Lord,” he said, “it was five talents you gave me, see how I have made a profit of five talents besides.”

‘And his master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant; since you have been faithful over little things, I have great things to commit to your charge; come and share the joy of your Lord.”

‘Then came the man who had received two talents; “Lord,” he said, “it was two talents you gave me; see how I have made a profit of two talents besides.”

‘And his master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant; since you have been faithful over little



without a lighted lamp would be useless in the procession. ('These 'lamps' were small clay objects, like an incense boat in size and shape; they would need refilling frequently.)

But what is important in our Lord's teaching is not the surprise; it is the delay of his coming. This may prove a greater trial of faith than all the terrifying calamities, such as the destruction of Jerusalem (see 2 Peter 3). Apathy can be more perilous for the Christian than persecution.

The apostles had asked for a sign of the Second Coming. Our Lord surely was giving them a clue in this parable, as in the Ten Virgins: it would be a long time before his return to judge mankind. Part of his technique was in training them to think things out for themselves (pp. 109, 166); that was why God had given them minds. His teaching was meant to develop man naturally, as well as supernaturally. Knowing, too, how he framed and reconditioned his lessons to suit his audience, the Ten Virgins could have had a personal message for Mary, and the Talents likewise for Martha. The essential requirement of the Virgins is oil, the love of God; the essential of the Talents is working for God. Mary the contemplative, Martha always doing things (p. 222).

This parable is fundamentally the same as the Pounds, spoken in the house of Zacchaeus at Jericho (pp. 294-296). Our Lord keeps the same imagery of trading, so suitable to a convert publican like Zacchaeus, but gives it a more spiritual tone, more suited to his apostles. A talent was the largest unit of money in use; it represented sixteen years' wages, sixty times the value of the 'pound' in Luke's parable. Large sums are in question here; Jesus is speaking to the first men of his kingdom, who will have the handling of the infinite treasures of his grace. But even these great riches are small compared to the reward paid for faithful service; it is sharing in the very life of God himself.

God distributes his graces differently to men 'according to their several abilities' (1 Cor. 12); Peter was chosen to rule the king-



things, I have great things to commit to your charge; come and share the joy of your Lord."

'But when he who had received but one talent came forward in his turn, he said, "Lord, knowing you for a hard man, that reaps where he did not sow, and gathers in from fields he never planted, I took fright, and so went off and hid your talent in the earth; see now, you have received what is yours."

'And his lord answered him, "Base and slothful servant, you knew well that I reap where I did not sow, and gather in from fields I never planted; all the more was it your part to lodge my money with the bankers, so that I might have recovered it with interest when I came. Take the talent away from him, and give it to him who has ten talents already. Whenever a man is rich, gifts will be made to him, and his riches will abound; if he is poor, even the little he has will be taken from him. And now, cast the unprofitable servant into the darkness outside; where there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

### **The Last Judgment**

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit down upon the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in his presence, where he will divide men one from the other, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; he will set the sheep on his right, and the goats on his left.

"Then the King will say to those who are on his right hand, "Come, you that have received a blessing from my Father, take possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me food, thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you brought me home, naked, and you clothed me, sick, and you cared for me, a prisoner, and you came to me."



dom, not John. But it is not so much the difference that is emphasized, as the obligation on all to work in the Lord's service. Men must use the sum entrusted to them, not let it lie idle; they must have God's interests at heart, not their own. This is obvious in the case of the third servant, who has the most prominent part in the parable. He did not spend it in riotous living, like the prodigal (p. 258); he did not waste it dishonestly, like the steward (p. 260); he was not in debt, like the unmerciful servant (p. 182). He was not bad, merely negative. He did no wrong; he did nothing at all. And that is why he was condemned. God's accounting is different from man's: 5 + 5 = 10, 2 + 2 = 4, but 1 + 0 = 0.

Our Lord may have been pointing the lesson of this third character at Judas. The malice of this servant was in mistaking, not his own abilities, but the justice and generosity of his master; Judas, too, shut his mind and heart to the goodness and love of Jesus; that is why he finally despaired (p. 384). God does not want men that are careful of their own personal security; they must be prepared to take risks. If they do not invest their spiritual credit, he gives it to others who will.

This scene follows naturally on the sentence of condemnation passed on the unprofitable servant of the previous parable. The three parables on the Second Coming have been concerned with individuals and life on this earth; on how men should occupy themselves, waiting for the coming of their Lord. Now is the time for the final scene, that last day when all men shall stand before the judgment seat of God. Our Lord begins his description with the impressive scenario of the Old Testament writers (e.g. Joel 3), then suddenly abandons it; all the spectacular scenery vanishes, leaving man face to face with God; or better, the Christian face to face with Christ. In place of Joel's thunderous voice of Yahweh pronouncing sentence of doom on heathen wickedness, Christ the King examines his subjects with characteristic intimacy and simplicity. He is still the Son of Man, one of us,



‘Whereupon the just will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, and fed you, or thirsty, and gave you drink? When was it that we saw you a stranger, and brought you home, or naked, and clothed you?”’

‘And the King will answer them, “Believe me, when you did it to one of the least of my brethren here, you did it to me.”’

‘Then he will say to those who are on his left hand, in their turn, “Go far from me, you that are accursed, into that eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you never gave me food, I was thirsty, and you never gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you did not bring me home, I was naked, and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison, and you did not care for me.”’

‘Whereupon they, in their turn, will answer, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you?”’

‘And he will answer them, “Believe me, when you refused it to one of the least of my brethren here, you refused it to me.”’

‘And these shall pass on to eternal punishment, and the just to eternal life.’

### **The Treachery of Judas**

Each day he went on teaching in the temple, and at night he lodged on the mountain which is called Olivet; and all the people waited for him at early morning in the temple, to listen to him. And now the feast of unleavened bread, the paschal feast, as it is called, was drawing near. When he had made an end of saying all this, Jesus told his disciples: ‘You know that after two days the paschal feast is coming; it is then that the Son of Man must be given up to be crucified.’



and he speaks our language; he does not need any elaborate stage-effects to impress us; he deals with persons and facts.

The facts he deals with are our acts of charity. He does not examine on the ten commandments; there is no need to; they are all summed up in charity (Romans 13, 9). But charity is a virtue that needs to be exercised (p. 220); that is why our Lord speaks of charitable acts, concrete realities, not abstract virtue (1 John 4, 20). In his choice of these six particular instances of charity, was he not suiting his message to his audience? He was at Bethany; Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were listening to him. The first three examples of charity would have special meaning for them: the Master graciously thanking them for the food and lodging they had so generously given him and his apostles.

Jesus must be the centre and object of men's lives; on their relation to him depends their destiny for all eternity. But there is something deeper still in his teaching; something so new and startling that he says it over and over again; this they must never forget. He is not really going to leave them at his Ascension; he will live on in a new way in each member of his kingdom. 'We are limbs of his body; flesh and bone, we belong to him' (Eph. 5, 29). It is the doctrine of the Mystical Body: the identity of the Christian with Christ, so dramatically made known to St. Paul: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'—'Who are you, Lord?'—'I am Jesus, whom Saul persecutes' (Acts 9, 4-5).

### Jerusalem Wednesday 5 April

Our Lord has finished his teaching in public. He will spend the next two days at Bethany resting and gathering strength for the great trial he is to undergo. It is a retreat, a time of prayer like that before the public ministry (p. 34), and the climax of the Galilean ministry (p. 168). But he does not forget his twelve; soon their faith will be tested severely; they must remember that he knows both the time and the manner of his death. It is God's plan that he has accepted, and is about to carry out.

But for Judas these words had a different sound: Jesus was ad-



At this very time, the chief priests and scribes and elders of the people gathered in the court of the high priest, whose name was Caiphas; and there they plotted to bring Jesus into their power by cunning, and put him to death; 'But not during the feast,' they said, 'or there will be an uproar among the people.'

They were still at a loss for some means of making away with him, frightened as they were of the people. But now Satan found his way into the heart of Judas, who was called Iscariot, one of the twelve, and he went off and conferred with the chief priests and magistrates about the means to betray Jesus. 'What will you pay me for handing him over to you?' he asked them.

And they, listening to him eagerly, consented to pay him a sum of money, thirty pieces of silver; so he promised to do it, and, from that time onwards, looked about for an opportunity to hand him over without any commotion.

### **Peter and John Prepare the Supper**

Then the first of the days of unleavened bread came; on this day, the paschal victim must be killed; and Jesus sent Peter and John on an errand; 'Go and make ready for us,' he said, 'to eat the paschal meal.'

When they asked him, 'Where would you have us make ready?' he said to them, 'Just as you are entering the city, you will be met by a man carrying a jar of water; follow him into the house to which he is going; and there you will say to the owner of the house, "The master sends word, Where is the room in which I am to eat the paschal meal with my disciples?" And he will show you a large upper room, furnished; it is there that you are to make ready.'

So they went, and found all as he had told them, and so made ready for the paschal meal.



mitting defeat. There was no hope now for the kingdom; he would save his own skin while he could. Jesus' repeated warnings about the danger of riches had only made him bitter and resentful; he had decided, after the rebuke here at Bethany on Saturday (p. 298), to break with Jesus and his Galileans (he was the only Judean among the twelve); but the Messianic display on Palm Sunday had caused him to wait. Now he shut his mind completely to Jesus' truth and goodness and gave himself to his real master, Satan.

The Jewish leaders knew that they had two days in which to act; there could be no trial during the week of the feast; if they waited till after the feast, Jesus might depart with the Galileans. Speed was important, and so was secrecy. Judas guaranteed both; he would stay on in Jesus' company and report on his movements. His absence would not cause suspicion; he was bursar, and often absent on business. Of course they would pay him—but only when the prisoner was safe in their hands. ('Pieces of silver' are shekels, four times the value of a denarius, the 'silver pieces,' p. 298).

### **Jerusalem Thursday, 6 April**

To acquire a house in the city, as the law required, our Lord gave mysterious instructions to Peter and John, as on Palm Sunday (p. 300), so as not to compromise the owner of the house (a secret disciple, possibly the father of Mark the evangelist); he was using his divine knowledge in foretelling these happenings. In keeping the location of the house from Judas, he was showing him that he knew what had passed at Caiphas' house.

The essential provisions for the meal were a lamb, sacrificed at the altar of burnt-offerings, unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs, and karoseth sauce. The jar of water carried by the servant was probably for their use at the supper (p. 346). Peter and John would have no difficulty in picking out this man; he was probably the only man at the Virgin's Fountain that day with a jar of water (only women carried water in jars; men used goat-skin bags). An early tradition identifies him with St. Mark (p. 378).



## Chapter 11: The Last Day



THE Jewish day began at sunset, not at midnight; first a period of darkness, then a period of light: 'So evening came, and morning, and one day passed' (Genesis 1, 5). On this basis, the last day of our Lord's life was from sunset on Thursday until sunset on Friday. That Friday was the day of his death is evident from the gospels; the next day was the sabbath (p. 404), and he rose from the dead 'on the first day of the week' (p. 408), our Sunday (Apoc. 1, 10).

The paschal feast began with the sacrifice of the lamb, on the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan (Exodus 12, 6). It took some considerable time to slay and pour out the blood of thousands of lambs on the altar of burnt-offerings; by the time this work was completed the sun had set, and a new day (15 Nisan) had commenced. When the fifteenth was a Saturday (as in 30 A.D.), it was the practice to kill the lambs on Thursday, so as not to break the sabbath. The Judeans did not cook and eat the slain lamb until the following evening (Friday); the Galileans were accustomed to eat the lamb the same day it was killed. That is why our Lord ate the paschal supper on Thursday, a day before the Judeans.

If we work from the only relevant, exact date in the gospels, 'the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius' reign' (Luke 3, 1, p. 30), the year of our Lord's death must be restricted to one of the five years between 29 and 33 A.D. (The margin allows for all hypotheses, and different systems of interpretation.) In only two of these years did the fourteenth Nisan fall on a Friday; they were 30 and 33 A.D. I have accepted 30 as the more probable date.

This chapter is made up of five main scenes, two at night (the Paschal Supper, the Agony and Arrest) and three by day (the Jewish Trial, the Roman Trial, the Crucifixion). It is possible to fix both place and time for every incident; no other day in our Lord's life is treated with such a wealth of detail. And rightly so: it is the most important day in history, the Day of Redemption. On this day, mankind was restored to the friendship of God, through Christ's atoning death on the cross: 'God laid on his shoulders our guilt, the guilt of us all' (Isaiah 53, 6).



## **The Last Supper**

And when it was evening, he came there and sat down with his twelve apostles. Before the paschal feast began, Jesus already knew that the time had come for his passage from this world to the Father. He still loved those who were his own, whom he was leaving in the world, and he would give them the uttermost proof of his love.

And he said to them, 'I have longed and longed to share this paschal meal with you before my passion; I tell you, I shall not eat it again, till it finds its fulfilment in the kingdom of God.'

And he took a bowl, which was handed to him, blessed it, and said, 'Take this and share it among you; I tell you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine again, till the kingdom of God has come.'

## **Jesus Washes His Disciples' Feet**

And as supper was beginning, there was rivalry between them over the question, which of them was to be accounted the greatest. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas, son of Simon, the Iscariot, to betray him. Jesus knew well that the Father had left everything in his hands; knew it was from God that he came, and to God that he went. And now, rising from supper, he laid his cloak aside, took a towel, and put it about him; and then he poured water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of his disciples, wiping them with the towel that girded him.

So, when he came to Simon Peter, Peter asked him, 'Lord, is it for you to wash my feet?'

Jesus answered him. 'It is not for you to know, now, what I am doing; but you will understand it afterwards.'

Peter said to him, 'I will never let you wash my feet.'

And Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, it means you have no companionship with me.'

'Then, Lord,' said Peter, 'wash my hands and my head



**The Cenacle 6 p.m. Thursday**

At sunset on Thursday began the last day of Jesus' mortal life; the time appointed by the Father had now come. But he does not wait, passive and fearful, for the blow to fall. He is not even thinking of himself; on this last day he will climax his life of giving by the supreme gift of the Mass, and the Cross. He speaks with emotion and solemnity; for all of them, this is to be the last paschal meal. By sunset tomorrow he himself will be the paschal victim sacrificed for the sins of men; by his death the Old Testament will have been brought to perfection (p. 88); the kingdom of God will have been established on earth.

As Master of the feast he began by blessing the bowl of wine which would be used for the four ritual drinks prescribed by law; each one would fill his own cup from this as required. After tonight his own blood will be the drink of the kingdom.

**The Cenacle 6.30-7.30 p.m. Thursday**

This was probably the third paschal meal the apostles had shared with Jesus; they had come up to Jerusalem with him for both of the paschal feasts since joining his company. Most of their meals were less formal, usually out in the open where positions were of no importance. But tonight they were formally given their places at table by Jesus himself. He had begun the meal with unusual solemnity; he had stated that this was their last paschal meal; he was ready to inaugurate the kingdom on earth. The same old discussions begin, each apostle eager for a position of importance in the kingdom (pp. 178, 290).

Jesus gets up from table; but the animated argument still goes on. With a sad heart he walks over to the basin near the door. What can he do to make these chosen leaders understand what makes a man greatest in his kingdom? Once before he had placed one of Peter's children before them (p. 178). Tonight he will go further still; he will abase himself like a slave (p. 266); he will wash their feet. This was not the ordinary act of hospitality before a meal (pp. 104, 158), which had already begun. It was not part of the ritual of the supper but an unexpected, spontane-



too, not only my feet.'

But Jesus told him, 'A man who has bathed does not need to wash; he is clean all over. And you are clean now; only, not all of you.' He knew who his betrayer was; that is why he said, 'You are not all clean.'

Then, when he had finished washing their feet and put on his cloak, he sat down again, and said to them, 'Do you understand what it is I have done to you? You hail me as the Master, and the Lord; and you are right, it is what I am. Why then, if I have washed your feet, I who am the Master and the Lord, you in your turn ought to wash each other's feet; I have been setting you an example, which will teach you in your turn to do what I have done for you. Tell me, which is greater, the man who sits at table, or the man who serves him? Surely the man who sits at table; yet I am here among you as your servant. Believe me, no slave can be greater than his master, no apostle greater than he by whom he was sent. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you perform it.'

'You are the men who have kept to my side in my hours of trial; and, as my Father has allotted a kingdom to me, so I allot to you a place to eat and drink at my table in my kingdom. I am not thinking of all of you when I say this, I know who are the men I have chosen; well, it remains for the passage in the scripture to be fulfilled. "The man who shared my bread has lifted his heel to trip me up." I am telling you this now, before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe it was written of me.'

### **A Traitor at the Table**

And as they sat at table and were eating, Jesus bore witness to the distress he felt in his heart; 'Believe me,' he said, 'believe me, one of you is to betray me; the hand of my betrayer rests on this table, at my side.'

And the disciples looked at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant; they began to ask him



ous action; it was a parable in action, like that of the fig-tree (p. 306). He does not explain his action till he has finished with all twelve of them; he gives them time for thought, and for their uncharitable feelings about each other to cool down. They are quiet now, and rather ashamed of themselves; the atmosphere is right for him to point the lesson of his strange behaviour. Their standards must not be those of worldly men, who desire power and authority. They are to imitate his humble service; his action must be the standard of their treatment of each other. This will make them great because it makes them like him. They need have no anxiety about a position of honour in the kingdom; he guarantees it under the familiar image of a feast (pp. 250-254).

When St. Paul wrote of the Last Supper, twenty-five years later, he began: 'The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was being betrayed. . . .' (1 Cor. 11, 23). And it is the presence of the traitor that keeps coming up in this account of St. John; he is mentioned three times in this paragraph. The depth of Jesus' love shows out in contrast to Judas' betrayal; even though he knew the baseness and ingratitude of this disciple of his, he would wash his feet like those of the rest of them. His action seems to have taken Peter by surprise; this would not be so unless he began with him. St. John does not exclude this; he begins with a general summary, and then highlights the vivid dialogue of Jesus and Peter. It was a detail John remembered, because it led up to Jesus' statement that Judas was the only one there not in the state of grace. There does not seem to have been any deeper meaning to Jesus' words, or any special symbolism in washing their feet. It was simply an act of humility, and he could wash their feet without disturbing them at table.

The only danger to Jesus' life that the apostles visualized was from the Jewish leaders; the secret preparations for the supper made them feel secure. That a traitor was sitting there among them never entered their heads. Our Lord had warned them in his quotation from Psalm 40: David's intimate friend, Achitophel, had betrayed him, a foreshadowing of Judas' betrayal. The con-



sorrowfully, each in turn, 'Is it I?' and then another, 'Is it I?'

Jesus had one disciple, whom he loved, who was now sitting with his head against Jesus' breast; to him, therefore, Simon Peter made a sign, and said, 'Tell us who it is he means.'

And he, leaning his head back upon Jesus' breast, asked him, 'Lord, who is it?'

Jesus answered, 'It is the man to whom I give this morsel which I am dipping in the dish. The Son of Man goes on his way, as the scripture foretells of him; but woe upon that man by whom the Son of Man is to be betrayed; better for that man if he had never been born.' Then he dipped the morsel, and gave it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot.

Then Judas, he who was betraying him, said openly, 'Master, is it I?'

Jesus answered, 'Your own lips have said it.'

The morsel once given, Satan entered into him; and Jesus said to him, 'Be quick on your errand.'

None of those who sat there could understand the drift of what he said; some of them thought, since Judas kept the common purse, that Jesus was saying to him, 'Go and buy what we need for the feast,' or bidding him give some alms to the poor.

He, as soon as he received the morsel, had gone out; and now it was night.

### **Institution of the Eucharist**

And while they were still at table, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat, this is my body, given for you; do this for a commemoration of me.'

Then, when supper was ended, he took a cup, and offered thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink, all of you, of this; for this is my blood, of the new testament,



sciousness of Judas' presence deeply moved our Lord as he sat down to resume the meal; his heart was breaking at the thought of the crime about to be committed by one of his twelve.

They were seated on mats or cushions on the outside of a low U-shaped table; the centre was unoccupied to permit serving without disturbing the guests. Each person reclined on the left side, supporting himself on his elbow and using the right hand to eat with. Our Lord was at the head of the table (bottom of the U); John on his right (the only position in which he could rest his head on Jesus), Judas on his left (otherwise he could not have handed him the morsel), and Peter next to John (he could not speak to Jesus privately, but had to attract John's attention, and then whisper to him). Only these four took part in the conversation; the rest were discussing the same momentous news in similar groups round the table. They had drunk the first of the four cups of wine before the feet-washing; they were now on the first course of the meal, bitter herbs ('the morsel') dipped in *karoseth* sauce.

Our Lord had some bitter herbs in his hand; he gave them to Judas as a mark of special friendship and honour (like drinking one's health). Judas could have asked for pardon; instead, he hardens his heart to the love of Jesus. There is no more need for subterfuge; Jesus (as well as Peter and John) knows what he plans to do. But our Lord will lay down his life freely; he, too, is eager to carry out his Father's plan without delay. There is sadness but no bitterness in Jesus' words to his lost disciple, who now leaves the light that is life for the darkness that belongs to Satan.

### **The Cenacle 7.30 p.m. Thursday**

The principal element in the paschal meal was the lamb; it was the second course. The third, and final, course was unleavened bread, after which the fourth cup of wine was drunk. This was the bread and wine that Jesus changed into his own body and blood. It is the fulfilment of his words in the synagogue at Capharnaum (p. 146). He does not say, 'This bread,' but only, 'This': what I hold in my hands is no longer bread, it is my body



shed for many, to the remission of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, for a commemoration of me.'

Then Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has achieved his glory, and in his glory God is exalted. Since, in his glory, God is exalted, it is for God to exalt him in his own glory, and exalt him without delay. It is only for a short time that I am with you, my children. You will look for me, and now I have to tell you what I once told the Jews, you cannot reach the place where I am. I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another; that your love for one another is to be like the love I have borne you. The mark by which all men will know you for my disciples will be the love you bear one another.'

### **Jesus Foretells Peter's Denial**

Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, where are you going?'

Jesus answered him, 'I am going where you cannot follow me now, but you shall follow me afterwards.'

'Lord,' Peter said to him, 'why cannot I follow you now? I am ready to lay down my life for your sake.'

And Jesus said to them, 'Tonight you will all lose courage over me; for it has been written, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of his flock will be scattered." But I will go on before you into Galilee, when I have risen from the dead. Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has claimed power over you all, so that he can sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail; when, after a while, you have come back to me, it is for you to be the support of your brethren.'

'Lord,' answered Peter, 'I am ready to bear you company, though it were to prison or to death. Though all else should lose courage over you, I will never lose mine.'

And Jesus said to him, 'You are ready to lay down your life for my sake? Believe me, Peter, this night, before the second cock-crow, you will thrice disown me.'



(Transubstantiation). He has now given them the food of the kingdom, the Blessed Eucharist. By the separate consecration of bread and wine, he portrays himself as a victim to be sacrificed on the cross; his blood will be shed in atonement for sin. This is the sacrifice of the kingdom; the new testament replacing the old. And last of all he ordains his first priests ('do this for a commemoration of me'); they are to perpetuate his sacrifice, and distribute his life-giving body and blood. This they do in the sacrifice of the Mass, which takes its form from the Last Supper and its efficacy from the Cross.

Jesus' words after the first Mass are full of joy; it is the supreme moment, 'Now.' He has made the first act of offering his life for the salvation of men; only his death remains to complete it. It is an act of love—the mark of a Christian.

### **The Cenacle 8-9 p.m. Thursday**

Peter's thanksgiving after his first communion was filled with one big distraction: where was Jesus going? Would he hide away in some remote, deserted place? Would they have to go searching for him? He had spoken the same words to the Jews at the feast of Tabernacles (pp. 194, 200); they, too, had been puzzled by them. Actually, here he was breaking the news of his coming death, as gently as he could. But Peter thought Jesus doubted their courage and devotion, that they would not be equal to some dangerous mission (p. 280). The one thing Peter could not stand was to be thought a coward; hence his insistence on his courage.

With great tenderness and patience our Lord prepares his little flock for the tragic day that has just begun. Peter especially would be subjected to all the malice and hatred of Satan; he has been chosen by Jesus as his vicar, the shepherd of his flock (p. 422), the rock that gives stability to his church (p. 168). He would deny that he knew Jesus; he would not deny that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. His faith would not fail, only his courage. It was on this indefectibility of faith that the other apostles, and the kingdom itself, depended.

To express the violence of Satan's attack, our Lord used the



But Peter insisted more than ever, 'I will not disown you, though I must lay down my life for you.' And all of them said the like.

Then he said to them, 'Did you go in want of anything, when I sent you out without purse, or wallet, or shoes?'

They told him, 'Nothing.'

And he said, 'But now it is time for a man to take his purse with him, if he has one, and his wallet too; and to sell his cloak and buy a sword, if he has none. Believe me, one word has been written that has yet to find its fulfilment in me, "And he was counted among the malefactors." Sure enough, all that has been written of me must be fulfilled.'

'See, Lord,' they told him, 'here are two swords.'

And he said to them, 'That is enough.'

### Our Lord's Farewell Discourse

'Do not let your heart be distressed; as you have faith in God, have faith in me. There are many dwelling-places in my Father's house; otherwise, should I have said to you, I am going away to prepare a home for you? And though I do go away, to prepare you a home, I am coming back; and then I will take you to myself, so that you too may be where I am. And now you know the way to where I am going.'

Thomas said to him, 'But, Lord, we do not know where you are going; how are we to know the way there?'

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way; I am truth and life; nobody can come to the Father, except through me. If you had learned to recognize me, you would have learned to recognize my Father too. From now onwards you are to recognize him; you have seen him.'

At this, Philip said to him, 'Lord, let us see the Father; that is all we ask.'

'What, Philip,' Jesus said to him, 'here am I, who have been all this while in your company; have you not learned



image of sifting: they would be shaken and flung about like the grains of wheat in a sieve. There was no reproach in our Lord's prediction of Peter's coming denial, only sadness and sympathy for this impetuous and deeply affectionate disciple. It was not egoism, or pride, that made this apostle boast so; it was love for his Master; eventually he would die like him on a cross (p. 422).

But at this moment none of them realize the fury that the powers of darkness are about to unleash. Our Lord searches for something striking to impress them and prepare them for the blow. They will be left alone, without him to look to. They had been on their own before, in Galilee (p. 132) and Judea (p. 216); but circumstances have changed entirely. He counselled poverty then ('without purse, or wallet, or shoes'); but those were peaceful conditions; now they must be prepared for war. And all the bewildered apostles can do is produce two swords! (Eph. 6, 10-18.)

This is the last day of Jesus' mortal life. The intimate, daily association with his apostles is finished; it will never be taken up again. He has eaten his last meal with them; he is now saying good-bye. It is definite, permanent, irrevocable; and that is why everyone is so sad. He had come on earth as man for two purposes: to redeem mankind, and to found a kingdom (his church) to bring that redemption to all men. By the end of this day he would have accomplished both; his work on earth would be concluded. From then onward he will begin a new relationship with his followers; no longer physically present and visible to their eyes, but more intimately with them by the supernatural vision of faith. He is more than a human friend and leader; he is their God. And that is the theme of all this farewell discourse. It is set out in the first sentence as a title, like the opening words of John's gospel (p. 36)

All partings are sorrowful; the stronger and deeper the bonds are, the more is it felt. To the apostles Jesus was everything; it would be a bleak and meaningless world without him. And he, too, felt all those deep emotions that men feel at parting; no one ever had loved with such an intense and pure love, or expressed it



to recognize me yet? Whoever has seen me, has seen the Father; what do you mean by saying, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you are not spoken of my own impulse; and the Father, who dwells continually in me, achieves in me his own acts of power. If you cannot trust my word, when I tell you that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me, let these powerful acts themselves be my warrant. Believe me when I tell you this; the man who has learned to believe in me will be able to do what I do; nay, he will be able to do greater things yet. It is to my Father I am going; and whatever request you make in my name, I will grant, so that through the Son the Father may be glorified; every request you make of me in my own name, I myself will grant it to you.

### **The Holy Spirit Promised**

'If you have any love for me, you must keep the commandments which I give you; and then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another to befriend you, one who is to dwell continually with you for ever. It is the truth-giving Spirit, for whom the world can find no room, because it cannot see him, cannot recognize him. But you are to recognize him; he will be continually at your side, nay, he will be in you. I will not leave you friendless; I am coming to you. It is only a little while now, before the world is to see me no more; but you can see me, because I live on, and you too will have life. When that day comes, you will learn for yourselves that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. The man who loves me is the man who keeps the commandments he has from me; and he who loves me will win my Father's love, and I too will love him, and will reveal myself to him.'

Here Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, 'Lord, how comes it that you will only reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?'



so tenderly as Jesus did at this leave taking.

He begins with the imagery of a journey, because that was how the apostles were visualizing his 'going away.' He describes his destination as a house; not a private residence, but a great palace with 'many dwelling-places' (like the temple, his 'Father's house' on earth, with its many buildings); he is going to make it ready for them, so that they can all be together, 'at home with the Lord' (2 Cor. 5, 8). The apostles are like children who see with the imagination, not with the mind: Thomas asks for a road map, and Philip for a picture of the Father. They have both, seated there in the room with them; Jesus himself is both the road and the journey's end ('the way . . . truth and life'). In one sentence he sums up the essence of Christianity: he himself is the object of faith, because he is God; to possess him is to possess 'truth and life.' To do that they must imitate him; he himself is their model.

To enter into the divine life, there is no need for a long journey; the apostles do not have to go anywhere; they have to become Christ-like. And the way to do that is by love. 'God is love; he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him' (1 John 4, 16). Our Lord now lets them into the deepest mystery of the Godhead, the final revelation of his own divine life: the mutual love of Father and Son is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

When friends part they promise to keep in touch with each other; they will compensate for physical absence by communication of their thoughts and affections. But Jesus promises his friends more than an occasional message; at Pentecost (p. 430) he and the Father will send their own eternal love, the Holy Spirit. It is not a casual visit that he promises; the Holy Spirit will stay with them always. He will be closer to them than Jesus himself has been during the past two years; he will not only be in their company, he will be within them. Through him they will share in the divine life; and that life belongs to the Father and the Son. So all three Persons will take up their permanent abode in the soul of him who has charity, the only condition for this in-



Jesus answered him, 'If a man has any love for me, he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father's love, and we will both come to him, and make our continual abode with him; whereas the man who has no love for me, lets my sayings pass him by. And this word, which you have been hearing from me, comes not from me, but from my Father who sent me.

'So much converse I have held with you, still at your side. He who is to befriend you, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send on my account, will in his turn make everything plain, and recall to your minds everything I have said to you.

### **Peace of Soul**

'Peace is my bequest to you, and the peace which I give you is mine to give; I do not give peace as the world gives it. Do not let your heart be distressed, or play the coward. You have heard me say that I am going away and coming back to you. If you really loved me, you would be glad to hear that I am on my way to my Father; my Father has greater power than I. I have told you of this before it happens, so that when it happens you may learn to believe. I have no longer much time for converse with you; one is coming, who has power over the world, but no hold over me. No, but the world must be convinced that I love the Father, and act only as the Father has commanded me to act.

### **The Vine and the Branches**

'I am the true vine, and it is my Father who tends it. The branch that yields no fruit in me, he cuts away; the branch that does yield fruit, he trims clean, so that it may yield more fruit. You, through the message I have preached to you, are clean already; you have only to live on in me, and I will live on in you. The branch that does not live on in the vine can yield no fruit of itself; no more



dwelling. And that means Jesus will be with them even more intimately than he is now.

Our Lord has completely reversed the image he began with. Instead of the apostles going to him, and living with him in the 'Father's house,' he will come to them, and make them into dwelling places for the Blessed Trinity. This 'coming' is visible only to minds illumined by faith; it will not be the pageant that the Jews were expecting (p. 100). Jude's question is based on this false picture of a Messianic triumph. Our Lord does not reply directly to his difficulty; he simply repeats the essentials of his teaching. It will be for the 'truth-giving Spirit' to illumine their minds and give them understanding of all that he has been telling them; his work will be to clarify, not to reveal new truths.

Our Lord here returns to the immediate present. He has been telling them of his new mode of life within them after Pentecost; but that is something in the future. This very day he is going to depart from them under circumstances that will severely test their faith; Satan ('one is coming') will seem to triumph in the dark hour of the passion and death. But the all-powerful Father will exalt the body of Jesus, hanging dead on the cross, by the glorification of the Resurrection (p. 352); they must remember that Jesus has foretold it (p. 348); it is his act of love and obedience to the Father's will. They must not panic; they must keep their peace of soul, as he does. 'Peace' represents the Hebrew word *Shalom*; it means good-bye. On the lips of Jesus it is something real, not a mere word; he bequeaths them his own serenity in facing danger.

Our Lord looked with pity and affection at these eleven disciples, all puzzled and confused at the deep mysteries he had revealed to them this night; they could not understand how the Master could go away from them, and yet be united to them more closely still. Jesus knew well their slowness to grasp supernatural truths, and their childlike need of pictures; so now he would explain his abiding presence under the image of a vine. This ex-



can you, if you do not live on in me. I am the vine, you are its branches; if a man lives on in me, and I in him, then he will yield abundant fruit; separated from me, you have no power to do anything. If a man does not live on in me, he can only be like the branch that is cast off and withers away; such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire, to burn there. As long as you live on in me, and my words live on in you, you will be able to make what request you will, and have it granted. My Father's name has been glorified, if you yield abundant fruit, and prove yourselves my disciples. I have bestowed my love upon you, just as my Father has bestowed his love upon me; live on, then, in my love. You will live on in my love, if you keep my commandments, just as it is by keeping my Father's commandments that I live on in his love.

'All this I have told you, so that my joy may be yours, and the measure of your joy may be filled up. This is my commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you. This is the greatest love a man can show, that he should lay down his life for his friends; and you, if you do all that I command you, are my friends. I do not speak of you any more as my servants; a servant is one who does not understand what his master is about, whereas I have made known to you all that my Father has told me; and so I have called you my friends. It was not you that chose me, it was I that chose you. The task I have appointed you is to go out and bear fruit, fruit which will endure; so that every request you make of the Father in my name may be granted you. These are the directions I give you, that you should love one another.

### **Hatred of the World**

'If the world hates you, be sure that it hated me before it learned to hate you. If you belonged to the world, the world would know you for its own and love you; it is because you do not belong to the world, because I have



presses the relation between him and them more accurately and vividly than that of a person dwelling in a house (p. 358); it is an organic union; both vine and branch live with the one life (the key word 'live on' is repeated eleven times), the life of the vine.

But our Lord has another reason for taking the vine as his illustration; branches are needed to complete the vine; they, not the trunk, bear fruit (this key word 'fruit' is repeated eight times). The trunk provides the vital sap, but grapes grow only on the branches. The work of converting the world (the fruit of the apostolate) belongs to them; the vitality and power to do this work comes from him. Both they and he are necessary; apart from the vine the branches have no life, and the vine by itself cannot bear fruit. They will surely recall this teaching when our Lord gives them their final commission (p. 426). The image of the vine and branches is the basis for St. Paul's doctrine of the Mystical Body: 'The Church is his body, the completion of him who everywhere and in all things is complete' (Ephesians 1, 23). In both there is the same vital, organic union of Christ and the Christian.

Our Lord now passes from the image to the reality; the key word here is 'love' (repeated nine times). The intimate, personal love of friendship is the bond that links him to them, and them to him. This is the vital force that alone can change their lives, and make them one with him. Their hearts should dilate with joy, not sadness; they share in the happiness of the divine love of the Father and Son. Nothing can bring greater joy than to be loved like this. It was love for men that was the motive of the Incarnation; he is about to give the greatest proof of his love by his death for them this very day. The proof of their love for him must be their love for each other. Since he lives on in each of them, in loving one another they are loving him (p. 338).

In contrast to the divine life of charity, is 'the world' (which stands for those who love self, and false temporal standards) of hatred. Jesus here puts his followers face to face with stern reality; they are his men (p. 82), they must expect his lot; their



singled you out from the midst of the world, that the world hates you. Do not forget what I said to you, "No servant can be greater than his master." They will persecute you just as they have persecuted me; they will pay the same attention to your words as to mine. And they will treat you thus because you bear my name; they have no knowledge of him who sent me. If I had not come and given them my message, they would not have been in fault; as it is, their fault can find no excuse. To hate me is to hate my Father too. If I had not done what no one else ever did in their midst, they would not have been in fault; as it is, they have hated, with open eyes, both me and my Father. And all this, in fulfilment of the saying which is written in their law, "They hated me without cause."

'Well, when the truth-giving Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, has come to befriend you, he whom I will send to you from the Father's side, he will bear witness of what I was; and you too are to be my witnesses, you who from the first have been in my company.

'I have told you this, so that your faith may not be taken unawares. They will forbid you the synagogue; nay, the time is coming when anyone who puts you to death will claim that he is performing an act of worship to God; such things they will do, because they have no knowledge of the Father, or of me. And I have told you this, so that when the time comes for it to happen, you may remember that I told you of it. If I did not tell you of it from the first, it was because I was to be still in your company.

### **Role of the Holy Spirit**

'Now, I am going back to him who sent me. None of you is asking me, "Where is it you are going?" so full are your hearts with sorrow at my telling you this. And yet I can say truly that it is better for you I should go away; he who is to befriend you will not come to you unless I



standard is the cross (pp. 86, 170, 328). Since they are to live his life, joined to him as branch to the vine, they must expect the same treatment as he received during his mortal life. This will call for great heroism and complete forgetfulness of self. Persecution must not surprise them; men always resent and hate those whose lives and teachings are a rebuke to their own evil ways. They should not be saddened by persecution; it is a privilege and an honour to be so closely associated with Jesus (Acts 5, 41).

They have seen, here in Jerusalem, the causeless hatred of the Jewish leaders for Jesus; it was so nakedly and openly evil that it could be inspired by none other than the devil himself (p. 204). The very nature of their mission is to preach Jesus and his kingdom; this will draw down on them all the malign hatred that men have shown to Jesus during his life on earth and that would bring about his death today. But, most painful of all, they will be branded as traitors and renegades by their own leaders; they will be shamefully disowned by their own countrymen ('forbid you the synagogue'), by the men nearest to them by ties of blood. These men will claim they are acting in the name of religion, even performing an act of worship to God, when they put them to death (Acts 26, 9).

This could have a most demoralizing influence on these simple Galilean fishermen brought up in a tradition of reverence for their rabbis. These Jewish masters who had taught the apostles in the schools and synagogues would themselves reject the kingdom that all Israel had waited for so long. So our Lord strengthens the apostles for the blow by warning them of what is to come. They must remember that nothing can happen to them that he has not foreseen. There are no secrets hidden from him who is one with the Father.

Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Jude had all asked questions when our Lord first told them of his departure. His reply had satisfied their minds, but they were sad just the same. And now he tells them that his departure is for their good: instead of his physical presence in one locality, they will have the spiritual, universal



do go, but if only I make my way there, I will send him to you. He will come, and it will be for him to prove the world wrong, about guilt, and about innocence, and about condemnation. About guilt: they have not found belief in me. About innocence: I am going back to my Father, and you are not to see me any more. About condemnation: he who rules this world has had sentence passed on him already. I have still much to say to you, but it is beyond your reach as yet. It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you into all truth. He will not utter a message of his own; he will utter the message that has been given to him; and he will make plain to you what is still to come. And he will bring honour to me, because it is from me that he will derive what he makes plain to you, because all that belongs to the Father belongs to me.

### Joy Will Succeed Sorrow

‘After a little while, you will see me no longer; and again after a little while you will have sight of me.’

Upon this, some of his disciples said to one another, ‘What does this mean, that he is saying to us, “After a little while, you will see me no longer, and again after a little while you will have sight of me”? And then, “Because I am going back to my Father”? What is this little while he speaks of?’ they asked. ‘We cannot understand what he means by it.’

Jesus, knowing that they were eager to question him, said to them, ‘Are you wondering among yourselves over what I have been saying, “After a little while you will see me no longer, and again after a little while you will have sight of me”? Believe me when I tell you this, you will weep and lament while the world rejoices; you will be distressed, but your distress shall be turned into joy. A woman in childbirth feels distress, because now her time



presence of the Holy Spirit. In God's plan this was not to be, until after the Ascension. The Holy Spirit was first introduced as a new source of life and love (p. 356); on the next two occasions (pp. 358, 362), and here, his assistance is intellectual ('truth-giving'). His work is to assist the disciples in convincing the world and converting it to him who is 'the way . . . truth and life.' He is not to reveal new truths; he will clarify and develop the deposit of faith, left once for all by Jesus Christ.

The climax of our Lord's life was his crucifixion; so it will be the main concern of the Holy Spirit to set men right in their attitude to this important event. Like an advocate at a trial, the Holy Spirit will prove that the Jews were the guilty party (their sin was unbelief in Christ); he will prove that Jesus was the innocent party (a criminal would not have ascended to the Father in heaven); he will prove that the sentence of condemnation was really pronounced on Satan, not on Jesus.

The apostles began their questioning again, after a long period of silence; they saw a seeming contradiction between the short separation ('a little while'), and the long separation implied in Jesus' return to the Father (opening words of previous paragraph). That is why they introduced this phrase into their question; they were comparing his present statement with one made previously.

Most of our Lord's discourse has been given to preparing his disciples for the future, for the time after his Ascension when they would be engaged in their primary work of preaching the gospel to the whole world. But now he returns to the present, to that great calamity that will test their faith and courage before the day is out. Before sunset tomorrow ('a little while'), he will be dead and buried, disowned and crucified by his own people; but almost as soon again ('a little while'), on Sunday evening, he will be back with them, in the glory of his risen life. Many other trials will come to them later; they will be prepared for them better than for this one. That is why he emphasizes its



has come; but when she has borne her child, she does not remember the distress any longer, so glad is she that a man has been born into the world. So it is with you, you are distressed now; but one day I will see you again, and then your hearts will be glad; and your gladness will be one which nobody can take away from you. When that day comes, you will not need to ask anything of me. Believe me, you have only to make any request of the Father in my name, and he will grant it to you. Until now, you have not been making any requests in my name; make them, and they will be granted, to bring you gladness in full measure.

### **Christ's Victory is Certain**

'I have been telling you this in parables; now comes the hour when I will talk to you in parables no longer, but tell you openly about the Father. At the time I speak of, you will make your requests in my name; and there is no need for me to tell you that I will ask the Father to grant them to you, because the Father himself is your friend, since you have become my friends, and have learned to believe that I came from God. It was from the Father I came out, when I entered the world, and now I am leaving the world, and going on my way to the Father.'

Hereupon his disciples said to him, 'Why, now you are speaking openly enough; this is no parable you are uttering. Now we can be sure that you know all things, not needing to wait till you are asked; this gives us faith that you were sent by God.'

'You have faith now?' Jesus answered. 'Behold, the time is coming, nay, has already come, when you are to be scattered, each of you taking his own path, and to leave me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have said this to you, so that in me you may find peace. In the world, you will only find tribulation; but take courage, I have overcome the world.'

'Rise up, we must be going on our way.'



short duration; it will be over in no time at all. He compares it to the pangs of childbirth, a common illustration in the scriptures for short but vehement pain (Micheas 4, 9-10). The joy of his presence on Sunday will more than compensate for the short but agonizing pain of Friday and Saturday (p. 418).

Our Lord is referring primarily to the Resurrection when he speaks of 'that day' (also p. 356). But it is not restricted to Sunday; it embraces the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is the commencement of a new period of joy and gladness; it is a permanent state, in contrast to the present, passing distress. It is entry into the life of joy with God.

It is this same epoch that our Lord here calls 'the hour . . . the time I speak of.' What now sounds so mysterious and baffling ('in parables' refers to the content of his teaching, especially the indwelling of the Trinity, rather than the manner) will be seen clearly only with the full light of faith and love (Gal. 5, 6). Our Lord here summarizes the main features of the teaching already given; the time when he will tell them 'openly' is yet to come. But the way he has read their minds in answering their unasked question gives them a sureness and confidence for the first time this evening. His constant repetition has turned their minds from the thought of his going away and fixed it on where he is going; he came from the Father, and he is going back to him. They think they have faith now; within a few hours they will see how shaky and presumptuous it was (p. 352). But he will not conclude on such a note of sadness; they must have confidence in him: his victory is certain. They, too, will triumph in him (1 John 5, 4).

These eleven men, seated in the dimly-lit room, had been listening to their Master for an hour or more after the supper was over. All his words were meant to console and strengthen them; there was no thought for himself. In his love for them, he put the thought of his own passion and death away from him. Nowhere in the gospels is there a deeper insight into the mind and heart of Jesus than in this last 'shalom' to his friends.



### Our Lord's Priestly Prayer

So they sang the hymn of praise, and then, Jesus, lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, 'Father, the time has come; give glory now to your Son, that the Son may give the glory to you. You have put him in authority over all mankind, to bring eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. Eternal life is knowing you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have exalted your glory on earth, by achieving the task which you gave me to do; now, Father, do you exalt me at your own side, in that glory which I had with you before the world began.

'I have made your name known to the men whom you have entrusted to me, chosen out of the world. They belonged to you, and have become mine through your gift, and they have kept true to your word. Now they have learned to recognize all the gifts you gave me as coming from you; I have given them the message which you gave to me, and they, receiving it, recognized it for truth that I came from you, and found faith to believe that it was you who sent me. It is for these I pray; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have entrusted to me; they belong to you, as all I have is yours, and all you have is mine; and in them my glory is achieved.

'I am remaining in the world no longer, but they remain in the world, while I am on my way to you. Holy Father, keep them true to your name, your gift to me, that they may be one, as we are one. As long as I was with them, it was for me to keep them true to your name; and I have watched over them, so that only one has been lost, he whom perdition claims for its own, in fulfilment of the scripture. But now I am coming to you; and while I am still in the world I am telling them this, so that my joy may be theirs, and reach its full measure in them. I have given them your message, and the world has nothing



**The Cenacle 9 p.m. Thursday**

They all stand for the final act of the paschal supper, the chanting of 'the hymn of praise' (the Hallel, psalms 113B-117). When it is concluded, our Lord makes his own prayer to the Father: he continues to stand (the ordinary form among the Jews, p. 272; kneeling, p. 372, was unusual), his eyes raised to the Father (p. 284). The gospels record him praying fifteen times; this is his most complete and sublime prayer. In his discourse he has been speaking about the Father; now he speaks to him. His prayer completes the instruction; it brings the feeling of reality that comes only from experience. Now the apostles can see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, how close is the union of Jesus with the Father.

Our Lord prays first of all for himself. 'The time has come' for the accomplishment of his personal 'task,' the redemptive death; only through his glorified humanity can this life come to men (Romans 4, 25). Supernatural faith and love (this is what is meant by 'knowing') are the qualities needed that men may have access to eternal life. ('Jesus Christ' became a proper name for our Lord among the early Christians; it would hardly have been used by him here; it was probably put in by St. John, see p. 38).

But most of his prayer is for the men who were to found his kingdom. They are to complete his 'task'; the glory of the apostolate will be the crown of all his work. They have been entrusted to him by the Father; he has trained them, and they have learned to believe that he, too, is divine. Now he is giving them back to the Father's keeping, ready for the work they were chosen for. Only one of them has been lost. At that moment he is only a few doors away, planning the arrest of his Master.

Our Lord does not pray that the apostles will be famous preachers, missionaries, and workers of mighty miracles; he does not pray that they will escape suffering, enmity, and persecution (which was probably what they feared most of all). It is not even for their success that he is praying. He knows what is the real danger for them, and their work; there is only one thing



but hatred for them, because they do not belong to the world, as I, too, do not belong to the world. I am not asking that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them clear of what is evil. They do not belong to the world, as I, too, do not belong to the world; keep them holy, then, through the truth; it is your word that is truth. You have sent me into the world on your errand, and I have sent them into the world on my errand; and I dedicate myself for their sakes, that they too may be dedicated through the truth.

### **Prayer for the Unity of the Church**

‘It is not only for them that I pray; I pray for those who are to find faith in me through their word; that they may all be one; that they too may be in us, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you; so that the world may come to believe that it is you who have sent me. And I have given them the privilege which you gave to me, that they should all be one, as we are one; that while you are in me, I may be in them, and so they may be perfectly made one. So let the world know that it is you who have sent me, and that you have bestowed your love upon them, as you have bestowed it upon me.

‘This, Father, is my desire, that all those whom you have entrusted to me may be with me where I am, so as to see my glory, your gift made to me, in that love which you bestowed upon me before the foundation of the world. Father, you are just; the world has never acknowledged you, but I have acknowledged you, and these men have acknowledged that you sent me. I have revealed, and will reveal, your name to them; so that the love you have bestowed upon me may dwell in them, and I, too, may dwell in them.’

### **Our Lord's Prayer and Agony**

All this Jesus said, and now, with his disciples, he went



that can prevent them from converting the world: and that one thing is sin. They are to do his work; it is only in their union with him, like that of the branches with the vine, that they can carry it out. Sin is the only obstacle to union with him. So he prays that they may be holy; sanctity of life is what they need; they must be true to him, and his teaching. The world, in which they will have to live and work, will be in constant opposition; it will try to corrupt and conquer them. They must live by the true principles and standards of Christ; they must be 'other Christs.' He is about to dedicate himself as a victim for sin, by his death on the cross; they are to share in his sacrifice, and become priest victims in dispensing his grace (Hebrews 10, 10).

### **The Cenacle 9.30 p.m. Thursday**

In this last part of our Lord's prayer, the walls of the Cenacle fade away; his gaze goes out upon all the centuries to come; he embraces all believers in his prayer. He is one Person, and the Father is another Person, but they are one in nature; this divine oneness is to be the distinctive mark of his followers. They live with the divine life, which is one; the outward manifestation of this inner unity will be the sign to all men of the divinity of the Church. It will be their great apologetic weapon. All around them they will see sects, factions, and divisions; their unity will stand out as a continual proof that God is with and in them, since he alone can give that oneness which only he possesses.

Our Lord is speaking of man's sharing in the divine life here on earth (2 Peter 1, 4); this they can do only through the supernatural virtues of faith and charity (Gal. 5, 6). Man's two needs, truth for his mind and love for his will, are completely satisfied in God; it is this supernatural life of union that is the object of Jesus' prayer to his Father. The divine love of Father and Son is the Person of the Holy Ghost; this love extends to all believers, because they are one with Christ (Gal. 3, 28). It is the bond that unites them to each other; it alone can bring unity, because through it they share in God's own perfect life of oneness.

### **Gethsemani 10-12 p.m. Thursday**

This is the key scene of the passion; it shows best of all the



out, as his custom was, across the Kedron valley to mount Olivet. Here there was a garden, called Gethsemani, into which he and his disciples went; and he said to them, 'Sit down here, while I go in there and pray.'

Then he parted from them, going a stone's throw off; but he took Peter and James and John with him. And now he grew sorrowful and bewildered and dismayed: 'My soul,' he said to them, 'is ready to die with sorrow; do you abide here, and watch with me.'

When he had gone a little further, he knelt down to pray; he fell upon his face on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass him by: 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'all things are possible to you; take away this chalice from before me; only as your will is, not as mine is.'

When he rose from his prayer, he went back to his disciples, and found that they were sleeping, overwrought with sorrow; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, how can you sleep? Had you not strength to watch even for an hour? Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing enough, but the flesh is weak.'

Then he went back again, and prayed a second time; and his prayer was, 'My Father, if this may not pass me by, but I must drink it, then your will be done.'

And when he returned, once more he found them asleep, so heavy their eyelids were; and they did not know what answer to make to him. So he left them and went away again, and made his third prayer, using the same words. And he had sight of an angel from heaven, encouraging him. And now he was in an agony, and prayed still more earnestly; his sweat fell to the ground like thick drops of blood.

When he came the third time, he said to them, 'Sleep and take your rest hereafter. Enough; the time has come; behold, the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go on our way; already, he that is to betray me is close at hand.'



internal suffering of Christ, a pain of soul that far surpassed all the physical torments inflicted on his body. It is in direct contrast to the Transfiguration (p. 172); there he is manifestly divine; here he is truly man. The two scenes give the complete picture. The same three apostles witness both.

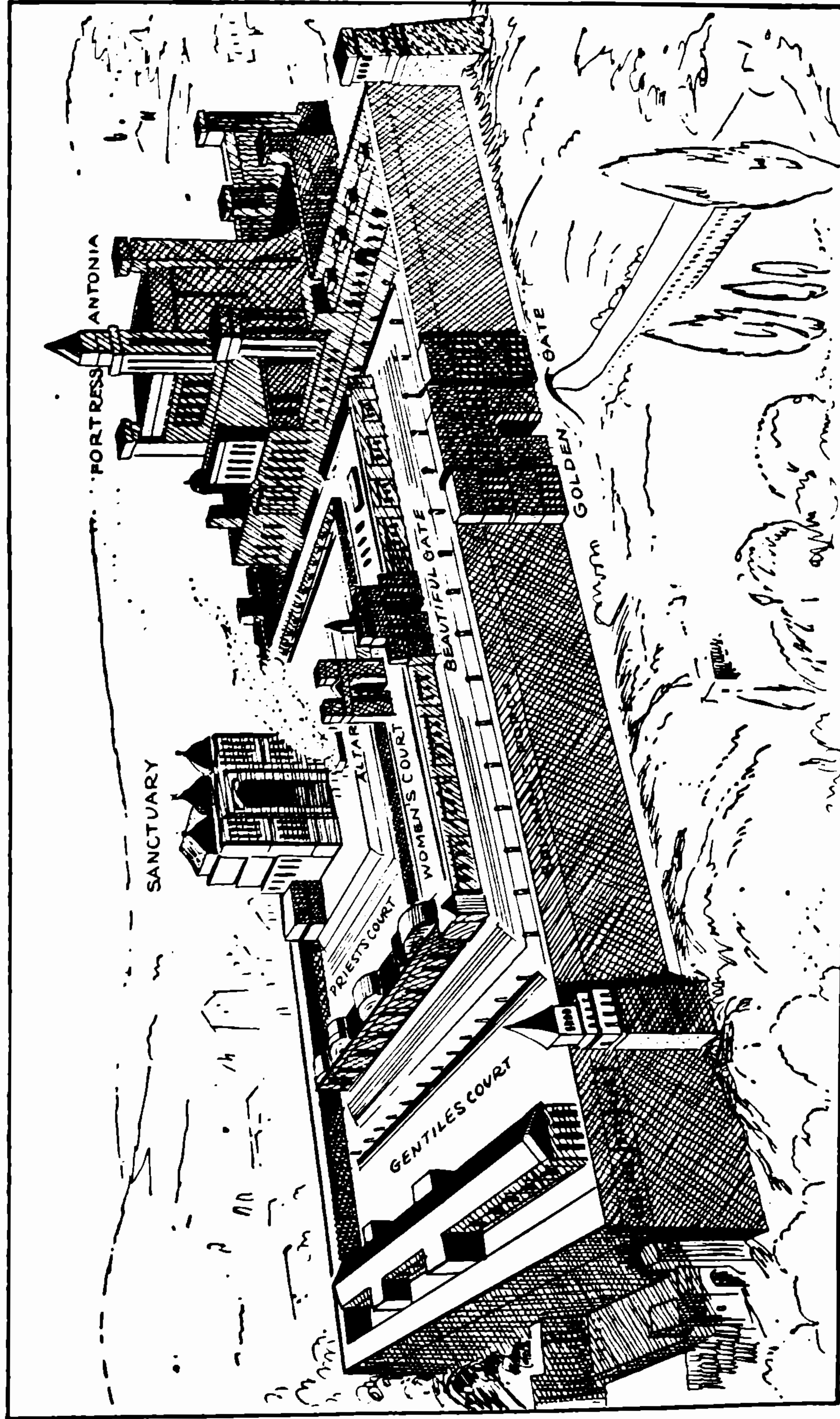
In the Cenacle our Lord prayed to the Father as an equal; he stood, calm and majestic, the high priest interceding for his Church. But in the garden a sudden change comes over him; he falls prostrate on the ground; his soul is plunged in sorrow, he shudders with fear. He is now the victim, no longer the priest.

By the use of three different words the gospels indicate the causes of this internal martyrdom. (1) 'Sorrowful': As man, our Lord allowed himself to experience all the heaped up enormity of sin; he who was essential sinlessness felt like an abandoned criminal; his innocence and holiness were merged in the sinfulness of mankind (2 Cor. 5, 21). (2) 'Bewildered': This was the fear of death. The cross loomed up before him, stark and terrifying; the whole vision of his passion, all the pain and shame of it, caused his sensitive soul to recoil in horror. (3) 'Dismayed': This was a feeling of disgust and depression. Desertion by his apostles, rejection by his people, the indifference of mankind, all caused a sense of failure. It was the pain of the Sacred Heart at the coldness and ingratitude of men.

How this mortal sadness and withdrawal of all consolation is compatible with the beatific vision, which our Lord never ceased to enjoy, is a mystery beyond human understanding.

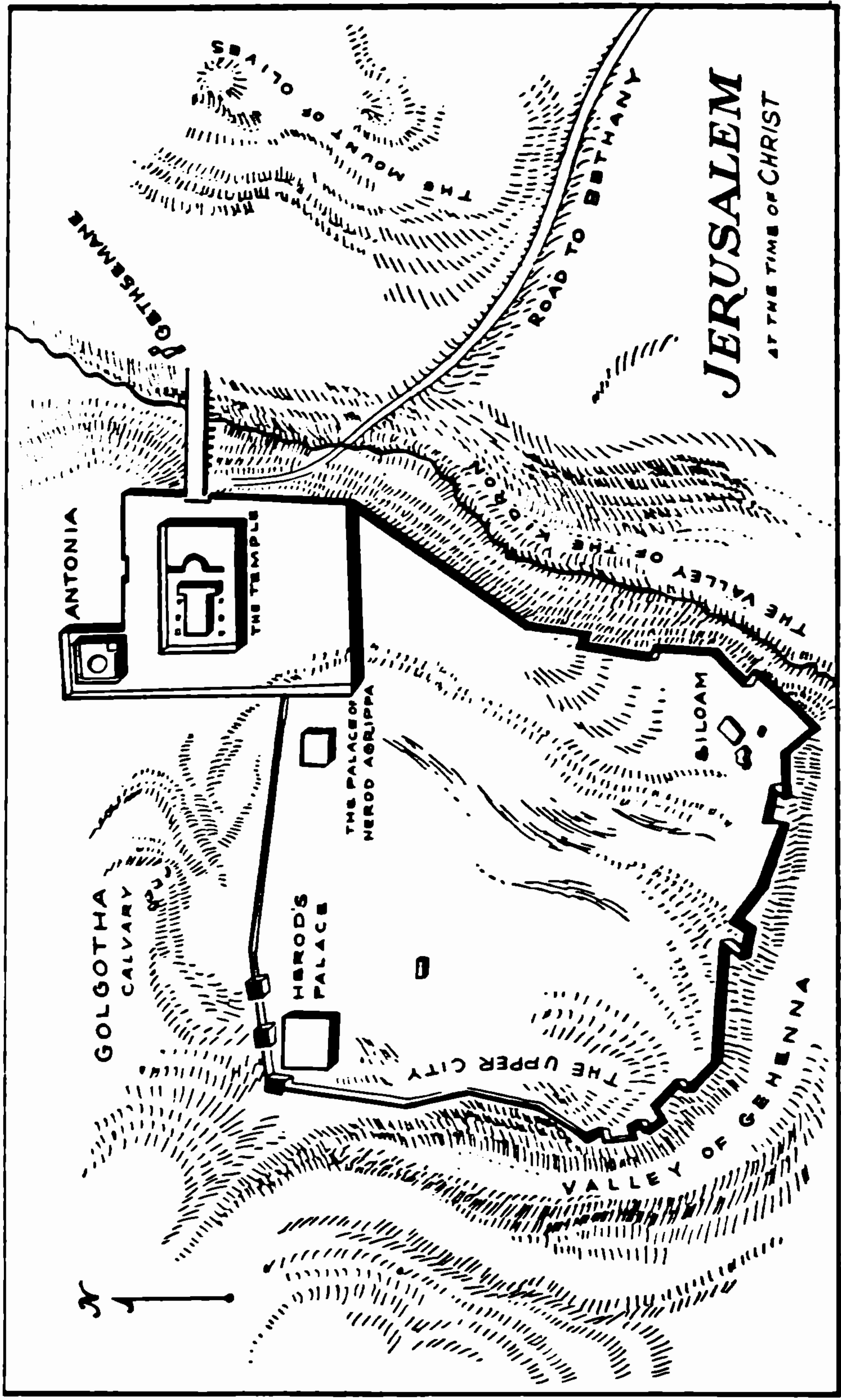
Our Lord's prayer was a spontaneous cry of nature. His whole being resisted death; he wanted to live. He sought relief from tension by moving about; twice he came back looking for help and consolation from his friends; and finally the Father sent an angel to strengthen him for the decisive struggle against his natural repugnance. At this moment of greatest depression, his prayer reached its greatest intensity. The blood mixed with sweat that bathed his whole body shows the effort it cost him to win the victory (Hebrews 5, 7). With absolute freedom he submitted to the Father's will; this deliberate act of obedience was the essential element of Redemption.





HEROD'S TEMPLE





# JERUSALEM

AT THE TIME OF CHRIST



## Jesus Betrayed and Arrested

And thereupon, while he was yet speaking, Judas, who was one of the twelve, came near. He knew the place well; Jesus and his disciples had often forgathered in it. There, then, Judas came, accompanied by the guard, and officers, and a great crowd carrying swords and clubs, with lanterns and torches; they had been sent by the chief priests and the scribes and Pharisees and the elders of the people. The traitor had appointed them a signal; 'It is none other,' he told them, 'than the man whom I shall greet with a kiss; hold him fast, and take him away under guard.'

No sooner, then, had he come up than he went close to Jesus, saying, 'Hail, Master,' and kissed him.

Jesus said to him, 'My friend, on what errand have you come? Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?'

So Jesus, knowing well what was to befall him, went out to meet them; 'Who is it,' he asked them, 'you are looking for?'

'Jesus of Nazareth,' they answered.

And he told them, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth.' When he said to them, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth,' they all shrank back, and fell to the ground.

So once more Jesus asked them, 'Who is it you are looking for?' And when they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth,' he answered, 'I have told you already that I am Jesus. If I am the man you are looking for, let these others go free.'

Thus he would make good the words he had spoken to them, 'I have not lost any of those whom you have entrusted to me.'

Then they came forward and laid hands on Jesus, and held him fast. Then those who were about him, seeing what would come of it, asked, 'Lord, shall we strike out with our swords?' And at that, Simon Peter, who had a



**Gethsemani 12.30 a.m. Friday**

The crisis of our Lord's long struggle came as the arrest party were on their way; the very nearness of the hour brought vivid realization of the stark reality. The three disciples were only a few yards away; they had seen the angel in the moonlight (the moon was full) and noticed the blood on Our Lord's face and hands; in between dozing they had caught snatches of his prayer to the Father. They stood up at his word of command, and went with him about forty yards ('a stone's throw') to the gate, where the eight were fast asleep. Judas came up, guiding the arrest party.

The paschal law prescribed residence in the city for the night of the supper; the western side of mount Olivet was regarded as part of the city, but not Bethany. Our Lord intended passing the whole night in the garden; Judas had heard him telling Lazarus not to expect them back at Bethany that night. The garden of Gethsemani is on the Jerusalem-Bethany road; it was a customary halting-place for prayer ( p. 222), as well as a rendezvous for the apostles, before returning to Bethany each night. It would seem that our Lord had passed the night here before this. On two occasions (pp. 152, 206) he was in the temple on a sabbath day; he could not have spent the previous night at Bethany, because it was two miles from the temple; one mile was the limit of a journey on the sabbath. Gethsemani was only a few hundred yards from the Golden Gate.

Possibly the garden was the property of Mark's parents, in whose house at Jerusalem our Lord had eaten the paschal meal. Mark is surely the young man in 'a linen shirt' (his night attire); probably he had been sent to sleep in a shed on the property, because of guests at home (maybe our Lady, and the other women who had helped prepare the paschal supper, see pp. 408, 428). He would hardly have followed the arrest party to the garden, dressed as he was, without being noticed; more likely the noise at the garden gate woke him up, and he came out to see what was happening.

It was midnight or later when Jesus was arrested. Judas had



sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear; Malchus was the name of the servant.

Jesus answered, 'Let them have their way in this.' And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Whereupon Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink that chalice which my Father himself has appointed for me? All those who take up the sword, will perish by the sword. Do you doubt that if I call upon my Father, even now, he will send more than twelve legions of angels to my side? But how, were it so, should the scriptures be fulfilled, which have prophesied that all must be as it is?'

Then Jesus said to the chief priests and temple officers and elders, who had come to find him, 'You have come out to my arrest with swords and clubs, as if I were a robber; and yet I used to sit teaching in the temple close to you, day after day, and you never laid hands on me. But your time has come now, and darkness has its will.' All this was so ordained, to fulfil what was written by the prophets.

And now all his disciples abandoned him, and fled. There was a young man there following him, who was wearing only a linen shirt on his bare body; and he, when they laid hold of him, left the shirt in their hands, and ran away from them naked.

### Jesus is Questioned by Caiphas

And now the guard, with their captain, and the Jewish officers arrested Jesus and pinioned him. They led him off, in the first instance, to Annas, father-in-law to Caiphas, who held the high priesthood in that year; Annas sent him on, still bound, to the high priest Caiphas, where all the chief priests and elders and scribes had assembled. (It was this Caiphas who had given it as his advice to the Jews, that it was best to put one man to death for the sake of the people.)



gone out from the Cenacle, four hours earlier (before 8 p.m.); Caiphas' house was right next door (about thirty yards away). The explanation of this delay in arresting Jesus seems to have been the need for secrecy (p. 342). Jerusalem was filled with Galileans eating the paschal supper (p. 345); time would be allowed for them to retire for the night. The presence of Roman soldiers ('the guard, with their captain') shows that Pilate had approved of Jesus' arrest; also that Caiphas was taking no risks of pilgrim interference.

Even at the last moment, our Lord tries to win Judas back; his rebuke to him, though full of sorrow, is affectionate. He shows that the kiss was unnecessary; he identifies himself; he is giving himself up of his own free will. The majesty of his bearing makes them fall over one another in dread; he could escape from them by his divine power, if he so desired. He lay prostrate in the garden; now he stands erect before his enemies. He has only to say the word, and the whole host of heaven is at his command.

The Galilean disciples were standing by, not knowing what to do. But the moment hands were laid on the Master, their fighting instinct was roused. Jesus had told them at the Last Supper to be prepared for violence this night (p. 354); Peter had his sword out before our Lord could reply to his question. Malchus was probably the first to put hands on Jesus. Our Lord rebuked Peter; he must learn to fight with spiritual weapons. This incident brought the apostles into danger; but our Lord was determined that they should not be involved in his arrest. By a gracious act of healing, he brought attention back to himself.

### **Caiphas' House 2-4 a.m. Friday**

The Roman governor had deposed the high priest Annas fifteen years before. Three years later, his son-in-law, Caiphas, was appointed high priest. But in Jewish eyes, Annas remained the lawful high priest, an office held for life (they did not admit the Roman right to depose). It was a courteous act of deference to his rank and the power he wielded that prompted Caiphas to have Jesus brought before him; both occupied the one residence.

When the apostles saw that Jesus had no desire to escape, and



Simon Peter followed Jesus, at a long distance, with another disciple, to see the end; this disciple was acquainted with the high priest, and went into the high priest's court with Jesus, while Peter stood at the door outside. Afterwards the other disciple, who was the high priest's acquaintance, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and so brought Peter in. It was cold, and the servants and officers had made a charcoal fire, and stood there warming themselves; there Peter stood, too, warming himself, with the rest.

And now the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples, and about his teaching.

Jesus answered, 'I have spoken openly before the world; my teaching has been given in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews forgather; nothing that I have said was said in secret. Why do you question me? Ask those who listened to me what my words were; they know well enough what I said.'

When he spoke thus, one of the officers, who was standing by, struck Jesus on the cheek; 'Is this,' he said, 'how you make answer to the high priest?'

'If there was harm in what I said,' Jesus answered, 'tell us what was harmful in it; if not, why do you strike me?'

### **Peter Denies His Master**

Meanwhile Simon Peter sat with the servants by the fire in the court outside, and warmed himself. One of the maidservants, as she saw him sitting there in the firelight, looked closely at him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Nazarene.'

Whereupon he denied it before all the company; 'Woman,' he said, 'I have no knowledge of him; I do not know what you mean.'

Then he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.



that he allowed himself to be bound, their courage vanished, and they fled up the side of Olivet, in the direction of Bethany. Peter and John kept together as usual, and quickly recovered from their panic. They followed the arrest party at a safe distance, back over the route they had come from the Cenacle to Gethsemani; it was about a mile, and would take twenty minutes or so. John ('the other disciple') was well known at Caiphas' house (it has been suggested that his mother, Salome, was a native of Jerusalem, and belonged to the priestly clan). He was able to bring Peter into the courtyard; probably he himself was able to go further in. He would certainly try to keep in touch with what was happening to the Master.

This was an unofficial examination by Caiphas, and the chief plotters. They hoped to get information that would enable them to frame a charge punishable by death, when the official trial began. They were looking for something that would impress Pilate: a plot to overthrow Rome perhaps. What was his plan ('teaching')? Who were his accomplices ('disciples')? But Jesus was aware of the trap. He repeated in substance what he had told the arrest party earlier (p. 378): he has not taught in secret, either at Jerusalem or anywhere else. He made no mention of his disciples; they must not be involved in what concerned him only. Probably a gesture of baffled anger on the part of Caiphas led to the blow. With perfect self-control, Jesus calls attention to the fundamental law of justice; that is all he asks for.

With an important prisoner in one of the rooms upstairs, there was no rest for Caiphas' household staff; while waiting for further orders, they congregated round a brazier of coals in the open courtyard. At an elevation of 2,400 feet, Jerusalem could be cold at this time of year; it would be warmer down in the sheltered garden in the Kedron valley. Peter joined the group by the fire; his one idea was to remain inconspicuous and unnoticed. At first he squatted with his head down, and did not take any part in the excited talk. When he saw that he was too obvious in the firelight, he moved out towards the entrance, into the shadow of



After a short while, the maidservant who kept the door looked at him, and said to the bystanders, 'This is one of them.'

And he made denial again with an oath, 'Not I; I know nothing of the man.'

Then there was an interval of about an hour, before one of the high priest's servants, a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said, 'Did I not see you with him in the garden?'

Then the bystanders said to Peter, 'It is certain you are one of them; even your speech betrays you; why, you are a Galilean.'

And with that he fell to calling down curses on himself and swearing, 'I am not; I do not understand what you mean; I do not know the man you speak of.'

And all at once, while the words were on his lips, came the second cock-crow. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word Jesus had said to him, 'Before the second cock-crow you will thrice deny me.' And all at once he burst into tears, and went out weeping bitterly.

### **The Jewish Trial**

The servants who held Jesus prisoner beat him and mocked him and spat in his face; they blindfolded him and fell to buffeting him and smiting him on the cheek, saying as they did so, 'Show yourself a prophet, Christ; tell us who it is that smote you.' And they used many other blasphemous words against him.

No sooner had day broken, than all the elders of the people, chief priests and scribes, brought him before their council. The high priest and all the council tried to find an accusation against Jesus, such as would compass his death, but they could find none; many accused him falsely, but their accusations did not agree. Until at last two



a wall. In the quietness he heard a rooster crow; it did not recall our Lord's prophecy (p. 352), because he considered he had not formally denied his Master. The girl at the door noticed the lurking figure and identified him; this time Peter called on God to witness the truth of his statement.

After this, in the activity and excitement of that night, Peter went unnoticed for an hour. His confidence quickly revived, and he moved back to the fire. He listened to the talk, and joined in, eager for some information about Jesus. His Galilean dialect made him conspicuous; an anecdote in the Talmud makes out that Galileans could not distinguish hamor (donkey), hamar (wine), amar (wool), and immar (lamb). This time a relative of Malchus challenged him. Peter talked wildly, calling down curses on himself (1 King 20, 13); his courage wilted under the hostility of the group around him. There was a sudden silence, as all eyes turned towards the guards marching their prisoner across the courtyard. Peter looked too; and, as the distant sound of a rooster crowing came to his ears, his eyes met Jesus'. It was a look of pain and sorrow, yet tender and understanding. That glance made Peter recognize how he had failed his Master. It must have been near four o'clock in the morning; roosters never crow before 2:30 a.m. at this time of year.

### Caiphas' House 5-6 a.m. Friday

Our Lord was put under guard in a room off the courtyard while Caiphas rehearsed the witnesses for the formal trial. For an hour or more these guards made him pay for disturbing their night's rest, by a brutal game of 'blind man's buff' (p. 392).

The Sanhedrin ('Council') was the supreme Jewish authority; its members were seventy, with the high priest presiding. For a criminal trial, the quorum was twenty-three; they were the judges; verdict was reached by a majority vote. It was the duty of the Council to draw up a list of the accusations; but, being judges, they could not make the accusations personally. This had to be done by other witnesses, at least two in number for each accusation (Deut. 17, 6); for their testimony to stand, exact verbal



stood up and falsely accused him thus: 'We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made by men's hands, and in three days I will build another, with no hand of man to help me." ' But even so their accusations did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up, and asked Jesus, 'Have you no answer? What is the accusation these men bring against you?'

He was still silent, still did not answer; and the high priest said to him openly, 'I adjure you by the living God to tell us whether you are the Christ?'

'Why,' he said, 'if I tell you, you will never believe me: and if I ask you questions, I know you will not answer them, nor acquit me. I will only tell you that a time is coming when you will see the Son of Man again, when he is seated in power at God's right hand, and comes on the clouds of heaven.'

And they all said, 'You are, then, the Son of the blessed God?'

Jesus answered, 'Your own lips have said it; I am.'

At this, the high priest tore his garments, and said, 'He has blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Mark well, you have heard his blasphemy yourselves from his own mouth. What is your finding?'

And they answered, 'The penalty is death.'

### The Despair of Judas

And now Judas, his betrayer, was full of remorse at seeing him condemned, so that he brought back to the chief priests and elders their thirty pieces of silver; 'I have sinned,' he told them, 'in betraying the blood of an innocent man.'

'What is that to us?' they said. 'It concerns you only.'

Whereupon he left them, throwing down the pieces of silver there in the temple, and went and hanged himself.



agreement was required (all the accusations except one failed this test and were rejected). The charge admitted, the judges could cross-question the witnesses on the meaning of their words and the circumstances of time and place (Daniel 13, 50-62).

The one accusation recorded seems to be based on our Lord's statement two years earlier (pp. 46, 305); or maybe Judas falsely represented his teaching on the destruction of the temple (p. 328). It was a serious charge; Jeremy was judged worthy of death on the same count (Jer. 26). But it was false; some of the judges soon picked holes in it; maybe Nicodemus (p. 196) and Joseph (p. 402) were present to champion Jesus' cause. Now that these two witnesses were shown to disagree, the legal trial could not continue, except by calling new witnesses. There was no need for Jesus to speak in his own defence; all the charges were null and void in Jewish law.

In desperation, Caiphas decided to extort a confession from Jesus. He appealed to his conscience as a Jew, owing obedience to the high priest. But he was thinking of 'the Christ' as a political charge to be presented to Pilate (p. 386); that is why our Lord does not use that title in his reply (p. 29). Instead, he makes an unmistakable claim to divine rank (Acts 7, 55): before long the truth of his claim will be manifest to all (p. 332). His divinity always has been the critical issue (p. 246); here he solemnly reaffirms it before the supreme tribunal of his people. It was an admission far beyond anything the Council had planned; by it Jesus freely sealed his own fate. Caiphas made a formal gesture of horror (4 Kings 18, 37).

### The Temple 6.30 a.m. Friday

Judas received his payment when Jesus was handed over to Caiphas. The Jewish leaders had no further use for him; instead of showing appreciation, they despised him for his betrayal of his Master. He played no part in the trial; he was left outside with his thoughts. In the long night hours he had time to meditate on Jesus' kindness and sincerity, in contrast to the hatred and hypocrisy of the Council. He had wandered off alone in the darkened streets; he was down by the temple when the delegation



The chief priests, thus recovering the money, said, 'It must not be put in the treasury, since it is the price of blood'; and after consultation, they used it to buy the potter's field, as a burial place for strangers; it is upon that account that the field has been called the field of blood, to this day.

And so the word was fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Jeremy, when he said, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of one who was appraised, for men of the race of Israel appraised him, and bestowed them upon the potter's field, as the Lord had bidden me.'

### **The Roman Trial**

Then the whole assembly of them rose up and led Jesus away in bonds from the house of Caiphas to the governor's palace. It was morning, and they would not enter the palace themselves; there was the paschal meal to be eaten, and they must not incur defilement.

And so Pilate went outside to meet them; 'What charge,' he asked, 'do you bring against this man?'

They answered, 'We would not have given him up to you, if he had not been a malefactor.'

'Take him yourselves,' Pilate said to them, 'and judge him according to your own law.'

Whereupon the Jews said to him, 'We have no power to put any man to death.' (This was in fulfilment of the words Jesus had spoken when he prophesied what death he was to die.)

And they fell to accusing him; 'We have discovered,' they said, 'that this man is subverting the loyalty of our people, forbids the payment of tribute to Caesar, and calls himself Christ the king.'

So Pilate went back into the palace, and summoned Jesus; 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked.

'Do you say this of your own accord,' Jesus answered, 'or is it what others have told you of me?'



passed by, on their way to Pilate. At the sight of Jesus going to his death, shame and remorse brought him almost to true repentance; but he had resisted grace too long. He ran into the temple, following some of the councillors who had gone in there for the morning sacrifice; his one thought was to call off the bargain. When they coldly repulsed him, he despaired. A kind word from them might have saved him.

The callousness and hypocrisy of the councillors is shown by their scruple over how to use the money. The field (not bought till later) doubly earned its name, *Hakeldama*; it was bought with Christ's blood money and was the place where Judas spilled his own blood when he committed suicide (p. 430).

### **Antonia 7 a.m. Friday**

Our Lord had been freed from his bonds for the trial before the Council: he was bound again for the journey across the city to the Antonia ('palace'). There he was handed over to the Roman guards, who took him inside the building, into the presence of Pontius Pilate, the fifth governor of the Roman provinces of Judca and Samaria. The representative of emperor Tiberius stood face to face with the incarnate Son of God; it was the most important day in the lives of both of them. The calm dignity of Jesus made a deep impression on this heathen ruler.

Pilate left our Lord under guard, and went out and down to the foot of the steps that gave entrance to the building. Caiphas and the Jewish delegation were expected. Caiphas had explained the urgency of the case in an interview on Thursday; this dangerous rebel must be put out of the way before the paschal feast began; his immediate removal was necessary for Roman interests, as well as Jewish. Pilate had agreed to the summary arrest and trial; Jesus could be put to death along with the other three rebels; their execution had been decreed and arranged for the 14 Nisan (p. 242). As a subject race, the Jews had lost the right to inflict capital punishment; Caiphas had to hand Jesus over to Pilate. (The Jews stoned, the Romans crucified; our Lord knew from the beginning the kind of death he was to die, p. 48).

But Caiphas was unprepared for the changed attitude of Pilate.



And Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? It is your own nation, and its chief priests, who have given you up to me. What offence have you committed?'

'My kingdom,' answered Jesus, 'does not belong to this world. If my kingdom were one which belonged to this world, my servants would be fighting, to prevent my falling into the hands of the Jews; but no, my kingdom does not take its origin here.'

'You are a king, then?' Pilate asked.

And Jesus answered, 'It is your own lips that have called me a king. What I was born for, what I came into the world for, is to bear witness of the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth, listens to my voice.'

Pilate said to him. 'What is truth?'

And with that he went back to the Jews again, and told them, 'I can find no fault in him.'

And now when the chief priests and elders brought many accusations against him, he made no answer. Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you make no answer? See what a weight of accusation they bring against you.' But Jesus still would not answer any of their charges, so that the governor was full of astonishment.

### Jesus Is Mocked by Herod

Pilate said to the chief priests, 'I cannot discover any fault in this man.'

But they insisted, 'He rouses sedition among the people; he has gone round the whole of Judea preaching, beginning in Galilee and ending here.'

Pilate, upon the mention of Galilee, asked whether the man was a Galilean; and learning that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, remitted his cause to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at this time. Herod was overjoyed at seeing Jesus; for a long time he had been eager to have sight of him, because he had heard so much of him, and now he hoped to witness some miracle of his. He asked



No doubt Jesus himself had moved Pilate deeply; his wife, Claudia, and the Roman captain detailed to represent him at the arrest, both raised serious doubts in Pilate's mind about Caiphas' talk of sedition. And now, this morning, the Sanhedrin had condemned the prisoner without the agreement of two witnesses, an essential condition for a valid trial according to Jewish law.

When the Roman governor disallowed the original charge of blasphemy, the Jewish leaders changed it to a charge of treason: Jesus claims to be the Messias, which in plain Roman language means, king. Pilate left the Jews at this point, and went inside to where Jesus was waiting. Our Lord knew he was to die; he had accepted that already. In his conversation with Pilate he is not trying to escape it; it is Pilate's soul he is trying to save. He works on the Roman sense of justice and fair-dealing. Pilate has a mind of his own; his judgment should be based on facts, not the unfounded charges of evil men. How could a man without an army be a danger to Rome? Jesus has a kingdom; the purpose of his life was to establish it. It is above nationality and politics; meant for all men, even Pilate. The test for admission is 'truth,' acceptance of the basic principles of right and justice; trueness of outlook and conduct in accordance with the pattern of truth, Jesus himself.

### **Herod's Palace 8 a.m. Friday**

Pilate was too sceptical and shallow to profit much from our Lord's teaching; his soul was not suitable soil for divine grace. Probably he thought Jesus a visionary with a fantastic dream of ruling the minds of men; but he was convinced the prisoner was no political rebel. He conducted him to the top of the steps, and told the Jewish leaders that their charge was groundless. Pilate felt uncertain, and somewhat afraid at the hostile reception of his finding; he was baffled by Jesus' silence and serenity in face of such accusations. A chance remark gave him the idea of extricating himself by passing the burden of decision to Herod Antipas; it could be interpreted as a peace-offering for his slaughter of some of Antipas' subjects, four months earlier (p. 242). This flattery pleased Antipas; he had a personal interest



him many questions, but could get no answer from him, although the chief priests and scribes stood there, loudly accusing him. So Herod and his attendants made a jest of him, arraying him in festal attire out of mockery, and sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate, who had hitherto been at enmity with one another, became friends.

And now Pilate summoned the chief priests, and the rulers, and the people, and said to them, 'You have brought this man before me as one who seduces the people from their allegiance; I examined him in your presence, and could find no substance in any of the charges you bring against him; nor could Herod, seeing that he has sent him back to us. It is plain that he has done nothing which deserves death. I will scourge him, and then he shall go free.'

At paschal time, the governor used to grant to the people the liberty of any one prisoner they should choose; and there was one notable prisoner then in custody, whose name was Barabbas. So, when the crowd came up towards him, and began to ask for the customary favour, Pilate answered them, 'Would you have me release the king of the Jews?' He knew well that the chief priests had only given him up out of malice.

But the chief priests and elders incited the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas instead; and so, when the governor openly asked them, 'Which of the two would you have me release? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' the whole concourse raised the cry, 'Barabbas, not this man. Away with this man; we must have Barabbas released.' (Barabbas was a robber who had been thrown into prison for raising a revolt in the city, and for murder.)

Once more Pilate spoke to them offering to set Jesus at liberty; but they continued to answer with shouts of, 'Crucify him, crucify him.'



in Jesus (p. 134). But he was too diplomatic and astute (p. 250) to assume responsibility.

Jesus remains silent before this half-pagan, worldly prince; the truth is of no use to those who are insincere. He who is 'the power and wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1, 24) allows himself to be treated as a fool; he submits patiently to their buffoonery.

The basic strategy of Caiphas' plan for the arrest and execution of Jesus was secrecy and speed (p. 342); he wanted to have Jesus a criminal, condemned to death by the Roman governor before the people were aware of what was going on. Pilate's attempt to evade the issue, by sending Jesus to Herod, had altered the situation completely. A precious two hours or more had gone since the prisoner had been handed over to the governor; it must have been well after 9 a.m. by the time Jesus was brought back to the Antonia. In the meantime, a crowd had gathered in the open square in front of the governor's residence. Their presence was unforeseen, and embarrassing both to Caiphas and Pilate; but from now on they dominate the trial, both sides manoeuvring for their support.

The reason for Pilate's presence in Jerusalem (he lived at Caesarea) was the danger of revolt against Rome during the Jewish festivals; the smallest thing could start an uprising among a fanatical crowd. He went out to the top of the entrance steps with his mind made up: his decision was a compromise, scourging not capital punishment. Before he could go back inside the palace, the crowd made known the reason for their coming; they were there to demand the customary paschal amnesty. Why, here was the obvious solution: he would confound Caiphas by appealing to the crowd. Was it not Jesus' popularity with the people that had been Caiphas' greatest worry? Some were calling for Jesus Barabbas (only the surname is given in the gospels; but an early Palestinian tradition gives his first name as Jesus). The close resemblance of name and crime struck Pilate; he would play the politician. With what he considered a shrewd move, he restricted the choice to these two; but it really showed how little he understood Jewish racial pride. He, a hated heathen,



Then for the third time he said to them, 'Why, what wrong has he done? I can find no fault in him that deserves death; I will scourge him, and then he shall go free.'

### **Jesus Scourged, Crowned, and Condemned**

Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him. After this, the governor's soldiers led him away into the court of the palace, and gathered the whole of their company about him. First they stripped him of his own cloak, and arrayed him in a scarlet cloak; then they put on his head a crown which they had woven out of thorns, and a rod in his right hand, and mocked him by kneeling down before him; they would come up to him and say, 'Hail, king of the Jews,' and then strike him on the face. And they spat upon him, and took the rod from him and beat him over the head with it.

And now Pilate went out again, and said, 'See, I am bringing him out to you, to show that I cannot find any fault in him.'

Then, as Jesus came out, still wearing the crown of thorns and the scarlet cloak, he said to them, 'See, here is the man.'

When the chief priests and their officers saw him, they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him.'

'Take him yourselves,' said Pilate, 'and crucify him; I cannot find any fault in him.'

The Jews answered, 'We have our own law, and by our law he ought to die, for pretending to be the Son of God.'

When Pilate heard this said, he was more afraid than ever; going back into the palace, he asked Jesus, 'Whence have you come?'

But Jesus gave him no answer.

'What,' said Pilate, 'have you no word for me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?'



was offering them his choice; a king, a Messiah in bonds, was mockery of their national hopes. The Jewish leaders were quick to counter this move; now, Pilate had on his hands what he feared most, a fanatical and hostile crowd.

### **Antonia 10 a.m. Friday**

Our Lord was scourged by the Roman soldiers inside the Antonia, not in sight of the crowds outside. Jewish law restricted the number of lashes to thirty-nine (2 Cor. 11, 24); the Romans had no such pity. From the Turin Shroud it would seem that our Lord's arms were tied above his head to a pillar; he was beaten over the whole surface of his naked body, with pairs of dumb-bell shaped metal weights ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long) tied to the end of thongs. His flesh was not lacerated by lashes (the Roman flagellum, under which a person often died), but bruised by the metal weights, which were flicked against the body with a whip-cracking motion (the Roman flagrum); in some places the skin was broken, and blood oozed out.

Jesus laboriously put on his clothes over his exhausted, pain-racked body, and was led into the barracks nearby, where the rest of the Roman soldiers were assembled. While awaiting orders from the governor, they made fun of this native rival of their illustrious emperor. A king should have a scarlet cloak; one of their scarlet military cloaks would do for that. They chose one at random from those hanging on the barrack wall. For a crown, they used thorn bushes bound with twisted rushes over the head (the whole head covered as with a cap, according to the Shroud); for a sceptre they handed him a stick from the wood-pile.

Twice already, in the four years of his governorship (26-36 A.D.), Pilate had offended Jewish national feeling; each time, an angry eastern crowd had threatened him; both cases had gone to Rome and were decided against him. He could not afford another mistake; that would be the end of his career. That is why he was afraid to free Jesus; he wanted the Jews themselves to do it. The mock royalty of scarlet cloak and crown of thorns made Jesus a ridiculous caricature of a king; surely his appearance would shame them into withdrawing their charge of treason. Caiphas



Jesus answered, 'You would not have any power over me at all, if it had not been given you from above. That is why the man who gave me up to you is more guilty yet.'

After this, Pilate was for releasing him, but the Jews went on crying out, 'You are no friend to Caesar, if you release him; the man who pretends to be a king is Caesar's rival.'

When Pilate heard them speak thus, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat, in a place which is called Lithostrotos; its Hebrew name is Gabbatha; and even as he sat on the judgment seat, his wife had sent him a message, 'Do not meddle with this innocent man; I dreamed today that I suffered much on his account.'

It was now about noon, on the eve of the paschal feast. 'See,' he said to the Jews, 'here is your king.'

But they cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him.'

'What,' Pilate said to them, 'shall I crucify your king?'

'We have no king,' the chief priests answered, 'except Caesar.'

And so, finding that his good offices went for nothing, and the uproar only became worse, Pilate sent for water and washed his hands in full sight of the crowd, saying as he did so, 'I have no part in the death of this man; it concerns you only.'

And the whole people answered, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children.'

And with that he released Barabbas, the man of their choice who had been imprisoned for revolt and murder, while he handed Jesus over to their will. The soldiers, stripping him of the scarlet cloak, put his own cloak on him, and led him away to be crucified.

### **Jesus Carries His Cross**

So Jesus went out, carrying his own cross, to the place



saw the point, and swung back to the real motive of the Jewish demand for the death penalty: Jesus had committed blasphemy (p. 384), a crime punishable by death according to Jewish law (Lev. 24, 16). A Roman governor was bound by his office to uphold the law of the land he ruled.

The title 'Son of God' was something pagans had heard of; at times the gods were supposed to return to earth (Acts 14, 10-12). Pilate's awe of the supernatural made him take Jesus inside for further questioning. He had been indifferent to Jesus' explanations earlier (p. 384); the knowledge he now demanded could have no bearing on his decision. Our Lord speaks only to remind him of his obligation to judge justly; no man may act against his conscience. One thing in Pilate's favour is that he did not want to kill an innocent man, which is more than can be said for Caiphas (or Judas may be 'the man who gave me up to you').

Sensing Pilate's determination to resist their demands, the Jewish leaders change their tactics: instead of attacking Jesus, they turn on the governor himself. With a shrewd appraisal of his character, they boldly push home their charge. They will take the case to Rome; the emperor Tiberius ('Caesar') will be told how his representative championed the cause of a rebel against his authority. That would certainly be the finish of his career. Pilate is beaten. He orders the judgment seat set up on the pavement ('Lithostrotos'), at the foot of the steps. Before he can pronounce sentence, a message comes from his wife, Claudia Procula. (Did she hear in her dream the whole world reciting the familiar phrase in the Creed, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate'?) It stirs this superstitious pagan to taunt, and fling a last insult at the Jews. They are mad with rage, as they raise their arms in the form of a cross, and shout, Salbeh ('crucify'). With the hope of averting divine anger at his sentence, Pilate goes through the hand-washing ritual, familiar to the Jews (Deut. 21, 6-9). The death sentence (not recorded in the gospels) was in Latin: Ibis ad crucem (You shall die by crucifixion).

The way of the cross was about 600 yards; the first 200 yards



named after a skull; its Hebrew name is Golgotha. As they led him off, they caught hold of a passer-by named Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, and loaded him with the cross, so that he should carry it after Jesus. Jesus was followed by a great crowd of the people, and also of women, who beat their breasts and mourned over him; but he turned to them, and said, 'It is not for me that you should weep, daughters of Jerusalem; you should weep for yourselves and your children. Behold, a time is coming when men will say, "It is well for the barren, for the wombs that never bore children, and the breasts that never suckled them." It is then that they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." If it goes so hard with the tree that is still green, what will become of the tree that is already dried up?'

Two others, who were criminals, were also led off with him to be put to death.

### Jesus Is Crucified

And when they reached the place called Golgotha, which means, the place of a skull, they offered him a draught of wine mixed with myrrh, which he tasted, but would not drink. There, then, they crucified him. Jesus meanwhile was saying, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what it is they are doing.'

It was not yet noon when they crucified him. And with him they crucified two thieves, one on his right and the other on his left, with Jesus in the midst.

And Pilate wrote out a proclamation, which he put on the cross; it ran, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.'

This proclamation was read by many of the Jews, since the place where Jesus was crucified was close to the city; it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. And the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write,



down into a deep valley (now filled in), the final 400 yards up a steep incline. Ordinarily the cross-beam only was carried, coolie fashion with the hands extended and tied to it (note the heavy mark across both shoulders on the Turin shroud, and our Lord's description of Peter's similar fate, p. 422); the upright was already in place at Golgotha. The cross-beam weighed about a hundred-weight; our Lord stumbled and fell under the load; the soldiers relieved him of it, requisitioning Simon for the last 400 yards.

The only incident recorded along the way shows the deep, tender compassion of our Lord (p. 258); his heart is moved at the smallest sign of sympathy. His own sufferings fade into the background, as he sees the terrible chastisement that is to come on the people of his beloved Jerusalem (pp. 302, 330). They will see their children slaughtered before their eyes; they will try to hide away in terror from the calamities of those days. If Jesus, who is innocent, is being punished so frightfully, how much worse will be the fate of this guilty city (Proverbs 11, 31). The imagery is based on the fact that dry wood burns more easily than green.

### **Golgotha 11.30 a.m. Friday**

Calvary is the Latin for Golgotha, a Hebrew word meaning 'skull.' It was a bare, limestone hillock, about twenty yards from the west wall of the city, from which it was separated by a ditch. Jesus was offered a drugged drink to deaden the pain of crucifixion (Prov. 31, 6). He tasted it, so as not to hurt the feelings of these charitable women, but he did not drink it; he wished to feel the full weight of suffering in all his faculties. He was stripped of his clothes, except for a loin-cloth. First his hands were nailed to the cross-beam lying on the ground (according to the Shroud, the nails passed through the clear space in the wrist). The cross-beam was raised by ropes, and bolted into a socket; the feet were then nailed with a single blow (according to the Shroud only one nail, the left foot over the right, and no foot-support). And all the time Jesus kept asking his Father to forgive the misguided Jewish nation (Acts 13, 27).

A portion of the title (9 by 5 inches) can still be seen in Santa



"The king of the Jews," you should write, "This man said, I am the king of the Jews." "

Pilate's answer was, 'What I have written, I have written.'

### **Mary at the Foot of the Cross**

The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took up his garments, which they divided into four shares, one share for each soldier. They took up his coat, too, which was without seam, woven from the top throughout; so they said to one another, 'Better not to tear it; let us cast lots to decide whose it shall be.' This was in fulfilment of the passage in scripture which says, 'They divide my spoils among them; cast lots for my clothing.' So it was, then, that the soldiers occupied themselves.

There, then, they sat, keeping guard over him; and meanwhile his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen, had taken their stand beside the cross of Jesus.

And Jesus, seeing his mother there, and the disciple, too, whom he loved, standing by, said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.'

Then he said to the disciple, 'This is your mother.'

And from that hour the disciple took her into his own keeping.

### **Jesus is Mocked on the Cross**

The people stood by, watching. The passers-by blasphemed against him, tossing their heads; 'Come now,' they said, 'you who would destroy the temple and build it up in three days, rescue yourself; come down from that cross, if you are the Son of God.'

The chief priests, with the scribes and elders, joined with them in pouring scorn on him; and in the same way, they said mockingly to one another, 'He saved others, he cannot save himself. Let Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross, here and now, so that we can see



Croce, Rome. It contains the word 'of Nazareth' in all three languages; the letters are about an inch in height, and written from right to left, in red on a white background.

### **Golgotha 12.30 p.m. Friday**

No major injury is inflicted on the body in crucifixion; it is the slow torture of nauseating pain, cramp, and suffocation. The fingers contract convulsively across the palms of the hands; the head sags forward on the chest, cramp seizes the muscles, and tension in the chest reduces breathing to short gasps. To prevent the body writhing about, it was usually tied to the upright by ropes; the Shroud shows no signs of rope marks on our Lord's body. Ordinarily a peg was set in the upright as a seat to take the weight of the body; the direction of blood trickles on the Shroud shows that our Lord's arms sagged 25 degrees from the horizontal; this sagging seems to exclude the seat. With the full weight of the body dragging on the median nerve of each wrist, the pain was excruciating; to ease this he would straighten his body by resting his weight on the nail through his feet. He could then breathe more easily. He probably did this each time he spoke; his seven 'words' cost him much.

Our Lord speaks his second 'word' to alleviate the sorrow of his mother; he entrusts her to the safe keeping of his most devoted disciple. This scene inspired the Stabat Mater; there is no better way to understand Jesus' sufferings than through Mary's eyes.

Three women, all named Mary (for our Lady's 'sister,' see p. 131), and one man stood by Jesus' side, in silent sympathy; they were his greatest human consolation in his three hours' agony on the cross. From all others he received nothing but taunts and insults. Golgotha was right by the western gate of the city; people coming up to the temple for the paschal feast stopped to read the title, and jeer. The leaders stood by, commenting aloud for the edification of the crowd, and jesting among themselves; they did not deign to address their words to Jesus. They were convinced now, that his miraculous powers had left him; he was



it and believe in him. He trusted in God; let God, if he favours him, succour him now; he told us, "I am the Son of God." '

The soldiers, too, mocked him, when they came and offered him vinegar, by saying, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.'

And one of the two thieves who hung there fell to blaspheming against him; 'Are you not the Christ?' he said; 'save yourself, and us too.'

But the other rebuked him; 'What,' he said, 'have you no fear of God, when you are undergoing the same sentence? And we justly enough; we receive no more than the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing amiss.'

Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come in the glory of your kingdom.'

And Jesus said to him, 'I promise you, this day you shall be with me in Paradise.'

### The Death of Jesus

From noon onwards the sun was darkened; there was darkness over all the land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'

Hearing this, some of those who stood by said, 'Why, he is calling upon Elias.'

And now Jesus knew well that all was achieved which the scripture demanded for its accomplishment; and he said, 'I am thirsty.'

There was a jar there full of vinegar, and thereupon one of them ran to fetch a sponge, which he filled with vinegar and fixed upon a javelin, and offered to let him drink; the rest said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elias is to come and save him.'



only a bogus prophet; he had never been sent by God. The demand for striking miracles is a familiar request of the Jews (p. 144). But they have all the evidence any true enquirer needs; it is not by coming down from the cross, it is by staying there and shedding his blood, that Jesus will lead men to find faith in him, the true paschal victim.

The soldiers joined in the mockery (an old tradition here makes mention of the crown of thorns still on Jesus' head). One of the thieves (called Dismas in early Christian writings) was moved by our Lord's silence under such insults: he seemed buoyed up by some inner force, a peace of soul that raised him above and beyond all about him. He must be the Messiah, as the title said, and the Jewish leaders taunted. Dismas' defence of Jesus shows his awareness of his own sinfulness, the first step to true repentance (p. 294). Humbly he asks a small favour of his King; maybe he might hold his horse's bridle. He was thinking of the Jewish kingdom after the Resurrection (p. 316). But Jesus promises him much more: the joy of sharing his own divine happiness this very day. Dismas is the only person canonized before death.

### **Golgotha 3-5 p.m. Friday**

The paschal feast was held always at full moon; so the darkness could not have been caused by an eclipse of the sun. In April, Jerusalem often experiences the black sirocco; the atmosphere is heavy; dust in the air blots out the horizon. Darkness increased as the afternoon wore on; it reached a miraculous intensity at the time of Jesus' death. The people of Judea ('all the land' is used probably in this restricted meaning) were filled with a mysterious dread, as they recognized the familiar scriptural description (Amos 8, 9) of divine judgment (p. 332); it was a sign of God's displeasure at the terrible crime being committed on Golgotha.

The last incident of Jesus' mortal life was an act of charity by a pagan soldier; he gave our Lord a drink, even though the Jews tried to stop him. Loss of blood, and intense pain, brought on a raging thirst; but Jesus gave no sign of his torment until he was in the throes of his death agony. The evangelists note that he



He brought it close to Jesus' mouth; Jesus drank the vinegar, and said, 'It is achieved.' And crying with a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Then he bowed his head, and yielded up his spirit.

And all at once, the veil of the sanctuary was torn this way and that from the top to the bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks parted asunder; and the graves were opened, and many bodies arose out of them, bodies of holy men gone to their rest: who, after his rising again, left their graves and went into the holy city, where they were seen by many.

So that the centurion and those who kept guard over Jesus with him, when they perceived the earthquake and all that befell, were overcome with fear; 'No doubt,' they said, 'but this man was the Son of God.'

And the whole crowd of those who stood there watching it, when they saw the issue, went home beating their breasts.

### The Piercing of Jesus' Side

All his acquaintances, with the women who had followed him from Galilee, to minister to him, watched while this happened, standing at a distance; among them were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joseph, and Salome the mother of the sons of Zebedee; and there were many others who had come up with him to Jerusalem. And now a rich man called Joseph came forward, one of the councillors, a good and upright man, who had not taken part with the council and its doings; he was from Arimathea, a Jewish city, and was a disciple of Jesus, but in secret, for fear of the Jews. It was already evening; and because it was the day of preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, he boldly went to Pilate, and asked to have the body of Jesus. Pilate, astonished that he should have died so soon, called the centurion to him, to ask if he was dead already, and when he heard the centurion's report, gave Joseph the body.



spoke 'with a loud voice,' even as he died; he did not fall into a coma (as usually happened in crucifixion), but was conscious right to the last. The supreme moment of his life was welcomed with a cry of satisfaction; he bowed his head in victory, not in defeat.

Two of the last four 'words' are quotations from psalms: 'Eloi, Eloi . . .' (three syllables) from Psalm 21, 'Into your hands . . .' from Psalm 30. By inspiring king David to write these psalms, a thousand years before, the Holy Spirit prepared two perfect prayers for Jesus on the cross. Undoubtedly he kept saying them over and over again during the three hours.

With the death of Christ, the temple-worship was at an end. God left his sanctuary in Israel (p. 324); this he made obvious to all by ripping open the heavy one-piece 'veil' that hung at the entrance to the holy place. A second significant happening was the opening of rock-cut tombs: Jesus' death brought life to all, even the dead. These 'holy men' are mentioned here because of the earthquake; they did not rise until Sunday (see p. 429).

Our Lady and St. John probably stayed by the cross all the time. Two of the women, Mary Magdalen, and our Lady's sister-in-law ('Mary the wife of Cleophas,' here called 'the mother of James and Joseph') were with them earlier (p. 398); but the soldiers would allow only near relatives to remain. 'Acquaintances' is rather vague; it refers probably to Joseph and Nicodemus, not to the apostles, who do not seem to have been on Golgotha.

These holy women were worried about reverent burial for the dead Master; bodies of criminals were Roman property, and usually were thrown into a common grave. How could a few unknown women get the governor's permission to have the body? And where could they bury it, even if they did? Like an answer to prayer, Joseph came up and offered his services, and his own tomb, just a few yards away in the hillside of Golgotha. Pilate received him graciously at Antonia. When he verified Jesus' death (persons often lived for two days on the cross) from the centurion, who had just returned from Golgotha, he gave Joseph the body, without asking any payment.



The Jews would not let the bodies remain crucified on the sabbath, because that sabbath day was a solemn one; and since it was now the eve, they had asked Pilate that the bodies might have their legs broken, and be taken away. And so the soldiers came and broke the legs both of the one and of the other that were crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus, and found him already dead, they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers thrust a spear into his side; and immediately blood and water flowed out. He who saw it has borne his witness (and his witness is worthy of trust; Christ is his witness), that you, like him, may learn to believe.

This was so ordained to fulfil what is written, 'Not a single bone of his shall be broken.'

And again, another passage in scripture says, 'They will look upon the man whom they have pierced.'

### **The Burial of Jesus**

So Joseph came and took Jesus' body down; and with him was Nicodemus, the same who made his first visit to Jesus by night; he brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes, of about a hundred pounds weight. They took Jesus' body, then, and wrapped it in a clean linen sheet with the spices; that is how the Jews prepare a body for burial. In the same quarter where he was crucified there was a garden, with a new tomb in it, one in which no man had ever yet been buried; Joseph had fashioned it for himself out of the rock. Here, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus, rolling a great stone against the door of the tomb. It was the day of preparation; the next day was the sabbath. Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of Joseph, and the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was buried; so they went back, and prepared spices and ointments, and while it was the sabbath they kept still, as the law commanded.



It was probably before the way of the cross began that Pilate granted this permission of the *crurifragium* ('legs broken'); it was the customary way of hastening death. If bodies remained on the cross after sunset, the Holy Land would be profaned (Deut. 21, 23); such a disaster must not be allowed to happen at the paschal feast. These soldiers arrived while Joseph was away from Golgotha; from the Greek for 'spear' comes the soldier's name, Longinus.

St. John, who alone records it, probably regarded the 'blood and water' as a miracle (actually, this fact is certain proof of death; it also demonstrates that the spear pierced Jesus' right side, as pictured on the Shroud); water as a symbol of baptism, and blood as a symbol of redemption (1 John 5, 6). It is because Jesus was the true paschal victim (Apoc. 5, 6) that God did not permit any bone of his to be broken, either before or after death (Exodus 12, 46). At his death the Jews manifested the first signs of repentance; they will find salvation in Christ crucified.

Just as the Jewish leaders had been racing against time to have Jesus killed, so his friends were hurrying now to have him in the tomb before sunset. Most of the three hours was taken up with getting permission from Pilate, and then buying the shroud (*sindon*, 'linen sheet') and spices. First the nail was taken from the feet; then the cross-beam lowered to the ground, and the nails removed from the hands. The crown of thorns was taken off his head. There was no time to wash the body and anoint it with oil and perfume (p. 298); the women would come back on Sunday for that. Part of the powdered myrrh and aloes was sprinkled on the linen sheet, the rest of it spread in the tomb as a disinfectant. The tomb was a cave cut in the hillside; the body was laid on a stone bench inside, and a circular stone (about five feet in diameter and one foot thick) rolled along a groove in front of the door.

Tradition has our Lady present at this scene. She did not leave, broken and tearful. She waited there to receive back into her motherly arms the crucified body of her Son; the same body she had first held in her arms thirty-three years before at Bethlehem.



## Chapter 12: The Risen Lord



FIVE times in the gospels, our Lord said he would rise from the dead 'on the third day'; his enemies used the same phrase three times. Actually he was in the tomb only for thirty-six hours, a day and a half according to our way of speech. But the Jews counted even part of a day in their calculations; so that the half-hour before sunset on Friday was reckoned as a day.

Our Lord rose from the dead with a glorified body. This body was the identical one he possessed during his mortal life, only now it had special powers. Working from I Corinthians 15, 42-44, St. Thomas lists four such qualities; the first three are natural to all glorified bodies; the fourth requires the divine intervention of a miracle. (1) *Impassibilitas*: freedom from pain and all physical needs, such as sleep and food. Our Lord's faculties of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste were just the same; but a speck in the eye would not bother him. (2) *Claritas*: the dazzling brightness of the beatific vision in the soul manifests itself in the physical features. This may account for our Lord's not being recognized immediately; it may have taken time to get used to his glorified appearance. (3) *Agilitas*: the power to move from place to place with the speed of thought. Our Lord could come and go in an instant. (4) *Subtilitas*: the ability to pass through solid objects without making a hole in them. But our Lord felt solid to the touch of another; he was flesh and bone, not a ghost.

Our Lord did not resume his former way of life with his followers after the Resurrection. Now that he had accomplished the object of his mortal life, the redemption of mankind, he concentrated once more on the kingdom (chapters 2-7). Most of his teaching during the forty days is not recorded in the gospels (they record only seven appearances); it has been handed down by oral tradition.

The Resurrection was the dominant note in Christian apologetic; it proved that Jesus was the divine Saviour. The Ascension had an important spiritual influence on the Christian outlook; it made them heavenly-minded. The Descent of the Holy Ghost was the birthday of the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ.



### The Guard at the Tomb

Next day, the next after the day of preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered in Pilate's presence, and said, 'Sir, we have recalled it to memory that this deceiver, while he yet lived, said, "I am to rise again after three days." Give orders, then, that his tomb shall be securely guarded until the third day; or perhaps his disciples will come and steal him away. If they should then say to the people, "He has risen from the dead," this last deceit will be more dangerous than the old.'

Pilate said to them, 'You have guards; away with you, make it secure as you best know how.'

And they went and made the tomb secure, putting a seal on the stone and setting a guard over it.

### The Women at the Tomb

And when the sabbath was over, early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalen, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought spices, to come and anoint Jesus. And suddenly there was a great trembling of the earth, because an angel of the Lord came to the place, descending from heaven, and rolled away the stone and sat over it; his face shone like lightning, and his garments were white as snow; so that the guards trembled for fear of him, and were like dead men.

So they came to the tomb very early on the day after the sabbath, at sunrise. And they began to question among themselves, 'Who is to roll the stone away for us from the door of the tomb?' Then they looked up, and saw that the stone, great as it was, had been rolled away already. They went into it, but could not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

So Mary Magdalen came running to Simon Peter, and that other disciple, whom Jesus loved; 'They have carried



**Golgotha Saturday 8 April**

The Jewish leaders ate the paschal supper on Friday evening, well satisfied with the destruction of their dangerous enemy. But on Saturday Caiphas felt uneasy, knowing that two of his council were in league with Jesus' followers; also that the body was in Joseph's tomb. They might make an attempt to fulfil Jesus' prophecy (often he had spoken of rising from the dead, pp. 46, 228). A pretended resurrection would be more dangerous than his original claim ('the old') to be the Messias. When they approached Pilate, he curtly told them to take the Roman guard at their disposal during the great festivals (the 'seal on the stone' was an added precaution against possible bribery of the guards by Jesus' followers). Pilate had seen enough of Caiphas and his councillors; but he was still afraid of their power to make things difficult for him at Rome.

**Golgotha 5-8 a.m. Sunday 9 April**

Four women were astir before daybreak, preparing the perfumed oils for the anointing that had been omitted on Friday evening. Presuming that they started from the Cenacle, it would take about fifteen minutes to walk to Golgotha; the sun was up (it rises about six in April) by the time they arrived. Seemingly the earthquake happened while they were on their way; it recorded the moment of Jesus' rising from the tomb (p. 402). The angel did not roll away the stone to let our Lord out, but to scare the guards away, and to show the women that the tomb was untenanted. If the guards fled back into the city, they would have passed the women coming to the tomb. But the women knew nothing of the posting of the guards on Saturday.

Their main worry was how to get into the tomb. They would need an iron bar to lever the big stone back along its groove; in their haste and excitement they had forgotten about that (or had this been left to one of the men, and he had not turned up?). It came as a surprise to them, when they saw the tomb wide open; it took only a single glance to see that the body of the Lord was no longer in the shroud lying on the stone bench. There was no



the Lord away from the tomb,' she said to them, 'and we cannot tell where they have taken him.'

The women were still puzzling over this, when two men came and stood by them, in shining garments. As they bowed their faces to the earth in fear, the young man seated on the right, in the tomb, said openly to them, 'You need not be afraid; I know well that you have come to look for Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was crucified. Why are you seeking one who is alive, here among the dead? He has risen again, he is not here. Here is the place where they laid him. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, "The Son of Man is to be given up into the hands of sinners, and to be crucified, and to rise again on the third day." You must go in haste, and tell Peter and the rest of his disciples that he has risen from the dead; and now he is going on before you into Galilee, where you shall have sight of him, as he promised you. That is my message to you.'

So they came out and ran away from the tomb, trembling and awe-struck, and said nothing to anyone out of fear. Then they remembered what he had said, and, in company with the other women, brought news of all this to the eleven apostles and to all the rest; but to their minds the story seemed madness, and they could not believe it.

#### **Peter, John and Mary Magdalen**

And while they were on their way, Peter and the other disciple both set out, and made their way to the tomb; they began running side by side, but the other disciple outran Peter, and reached the tomb first. He looked in and saw the linen sheet lying there, but he did not go in. Simon Peter, coming up after him, went into the tomb and saw the linen sheet lying there, and also the chinband which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen sheet, but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and saw this, and learned to believe. They had not yet mas-



sign of the angel who had frightened the guards away. The women's first thought was that robbers had broken in.

It was only after the departure of Mary Magdalen that the angels appeared; though in human form (Genesis 18), they were easily recognizable as angels (2 Mac. 3, 26). The women were inside the tomb; the angel who spoke to them (probably the same one that had rolled back the stone) was seated on the bench where Jesus' body had lain; it was to the right of the entrance. To calm their fears, the angel points out that they are in the right tomb; that is the linen shroud in which Jesus was buried; his body has not been stolen; he has risen. In this matter of fact way was the stupendous miracle of the Resurrection announced.

They are to take a special message to Peter, the head of Christ's kingdom (it will also assure him of Jesus' pardon for his denial): it is in Galilee that the Master will continue his instructions on many details of life in the kingdom, which they have yet to learn. He told them at the Last Supper (p. 352) that he would meet them again in the familiar surroundings of the lakeside, where they would be free from interference from the Jewish leaders.

The three women panicked. But after the first shock had worn off, and they were back in their normal surroundings with the other women, they did fulfil the mission given them by the angel. And by this time Peter and John were back from Golgotha.

Peter and John were together somewhere, probably at the Cenacle; they were alarmed at Mary's breathless news. Although our Lord had told them he would rise from the dead (pp. 170, 176, 290, 352), they were thinking of him 'dead and buried'; and now the Jews had gone to the unbelievable lengths of profaning his dead body. Their apprehension increased as the three women ran past them, too terrified to speak. Had they found the Master's body, cast out of the tomb, and perhaps mutilated by his enemies? In his eagerness, spurred on by the urgency of the situation, John runs ahead; relieved at seeing the grave cloths intact, he waits for Peter, and together they go into the tomb. The linen sheet lay there on the bench, undisturbed. If anyone



tered what was written of him, that he was to rise from the dead.

The disciples went back home, full of surmise over what had befallen; but Mary stood outside before the tomb, weeping. And she bent down, still weeping, and looked into the tomb; and saw two angels clothed in white sitting there, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?'

'Because they have carried away my Lord,' she said, 'and I cannot tell where they have taken him.'

Saying this, she turned round, and saw Jesus standing there, without knowing that it was Jesus. 'Woman,' Jesus said to her, 'why are you weeping? For whom are you searching?'

She supposed that it must be the gardener, and said to him, 'If it is you, Sir, that have carried him off, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him away.'

Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

And she turned and said to him, 'Rabboni' (which is Hebrew for Master).

Then Jesus said, 'Do not cling to me thus; I have not yet gone up to my Father's side. Return to my brethren, and tell them this; I am going up to him who is my Father and your Father, who is my God and your God.'

So Mary Magdalen, the woman out of whom he had cast seven devils, went and gave the news to those who had been of his company, where they mourned and wept, of how she had seen the Lord, and he had spoken thus to her. And they, when they were told that he was alive and that she had seen him, could not believe it.

### **The Soldiers' Testimony**

The women had not finished their journey, when some of the guards reached the city, and told the chief priests of all that befell. These gathered with the elders to take



had taken the body, they would have carried it in the shroud; or, if they had left the shroud, it would be disarranged, and probably thrown on the floor. But the chinband was the most convincing piece of evidence; it was neatly folded up on the bench. No robber would have done that; it was the work of the Master's own hands. These facts convinced both Peter and John; the latter (it is a scene found only in St. John's Gospel) confesses that the apostles should have known of Jesus' resurrection, even without this evidence; it was foretold in the scriptures (p. 434).

Though no mention is made of it in the gospels, Christians are quite sure that our Lord appeared first of all to his mother. But now it was time for him to go and comfort one most devoted follower; he appeared to her first because she was in greatest need. Magdalen was overwrought with sorrow and anxiety; her three companions had disappeared, Peter and John had gone off deep in thought; the whole burden of finding the dear Master's body was left to her. She looked into the tomb again; the two angels the women had seen were there, but her eyes were so filled with tears, and her heart with misery, that she hardly noticed them. She showed none of the consternation of her three companions at sight of them. Her eyes were on the bench where she had last seen the Master's body, on Friday evening (probably the grave cloths had been taken away by Peter; Mary seemingly noticed the stone pillow on which our Lord's head had rested). She was not interested in angels; Jesus alone filled all her mind. At the sound of her name, spoken with an accent she knew so well, Mary fell on her knees and threw her arms about Jesus' knees (p. 68); now that she had found her Master, she would never let him go. Gently our Lord calmed her anxiety; she need have no fear, he is not going to leave her; he has forty days before the Ascension. There are others, too, in need of comfort; she must go to them, and make known that their Master has risen from the dead.

### Caiphas' House 7 a.m. Sunday 9 April

This incident proves that Golgotha was outside the city. The guards saw the difficult situation in which they were placed; they would be punished severely (Acts 12, 19). After some thought



counsel, and offered a rich bribe to the soldiers; 'Let this,' they said, 'be your tale, "His disciples came by night and stole him away, while we were asleep." If this should come to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him, and see that no harm comes to you.'

The soldiers took the bribe, and did as they were instructed; and this is the tale which has gone abroad among the Jews, to this day.

### **Jesus Walks with Cleophas**

It was on the same day that two of them were walking to a village called Emmaus, seven miles away from Jerusalem, discussing all that had happened. They were still conversing and debating together, when Jesus himself drew near, and began to walk beside them; but their eyes were held fast, so that they could not recognize him; he appeared in the form of a stranger.

And he said to them, 'What talk is this you exchange between you as you go along?'

Sad-faced they stopped, and one of them, who was called Cleophas, answered him, 'What, are you the only pilgrim in Jerusalem who has not heard of what has happened there in the last few days?'

'What happenings?' he asked.

And they said, 'About Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet whose words and acts had power with God, and with all the people; how the chief priests, and our rulers, handed him over to be sentenced to death, and so crucified him. For ourselves, we had hoped that it was he who was to deliver Israel; but now, to crown it all, today is the third day since it befell. Some women, indeed, who belonged to our company, alarmed us; they had been at the tomb early in the morning and could not find his body; whereupon they came back and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of



(the women had already left the tomb) they decided that Caiphas could give them the best protection against Roman court martial.

St. Matthew records the incident as a warning to the Jewish Christians against the hypocrisy and untrustworthiness of their leaders. For modern apologetics the explanation adopted by Caiphas is important. It is based on an indisputable fact: the tomb was empty. There was never any doubt about the identity of this tomb; there was never any question of the reality of Jesus' death.

### Jerusalem to Emmaus Sunday Afternoon

As the scriptures had foretold, and our Lord had warned his apostles (p. 352), the sheep would be scattered once the Shepherd was killed. These two strays must not be lost; so the Good Shepherd would leave the rest of his flock, and go after them (p. 256). Cleophas was probably St. Joseph's brother (p. 131), and husband to Mary, one of the women at the tomb. Various names have been given to his companion; the most popular is Ammaon, which means a citizen of Emmaus. Probably both of them belonged to the group of seventy-two disciples (p. 216). They knew nothing of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalen; the only information they had was that given by the three women. They must have left the Cenacle that morning; it could not have been much later than 9 a.m. when Magdalen brought the first news of the risen Master. Whether they left the city at once, or waited till afternoon, depends on the location of Emmaus. There are two claimants for the honour of being the village in question. The bulk of the MSS read seven miles, which would fit the present village of Kubeibeh. But a number of MSS read seventeen miles, instead of seven; this would fit Nicopolis, the Emmaus of Machabean times (1 Mac. 4, 3). It would take only two hours to reach Kubeibeh, but about five to walk to Nicopolis.

There is a strangeness about our Lord's appearance and his voice. Possibly all glorified bodies take on a new quality, so that it takes time for people to recognize the once familiar features (see *Claritas*, p. 407). From the wording, 'their eyes were held fast,' it would seem that God prevented recognition until their



those who were with us went to the tomb, and found that all was as the women had said, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'Too slow of wit, too dull of heart, to believe all those sayings of the prophets! Was it not to be expected that the Christ should undergo these sufferings, and enter so into his glory?'

Then, going back to Moses and the whole line of the prophets, he began to interpret the words used of himself by all the scriptures.

And now they were drawing near the village to which they were walking, and he made as if to go on further; but they pressed him, 'Stay with us,' they said; 'it is towards evening, and it is far on in the day.'

So he went in to stay with them. And then, when he sat down at table with them, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and offered it to them; whereupon their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and with that, he disappeared from their sight.

And they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us when he spoke to us on the road, and when he made the scriptures plain to us?'

Rising up there and then, they went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven apostles and their companions gathered together, now saying, 'The Lord has indeed risen, and has appeared to Simon.'

And they too told the story of their encounter on the road, and how they recognized him when he broke bread; but they did not believe them either.

### **Jesus Appears to His Apostles**

And now it was evening on the same day, the first day of the week; for fear of the Jews, the eleven had locked the doors of the room in which they had assembled. While they were speaking of this, as they sat at table, Jesus himself came, and stood there in the midst of them; 'Peace be upon you,' he said.



faith was strengthened; it is belief in Jesus as their Redeemer and their God that must be the basis of their lives. Their thoughts are on the tragic happenings of Friday; and to this sympathetic stranger they recount what might be called the first Life of Christ.

There are about 140 Messianic passages in the Old Testament; our Lord explained those which referred to his redemption through suffering. There are four of these in the Pentateuch, written by Moses (p. 157). In Genesis 3, 15 (the first Messianic prophecy) it is stated that the Messiah will redeem mankind, but not without hurt to himself. The other three passages refer to Christ typically: the paschal lamb (Exodus 12), the scapegoat (Leviticus 16), the brazen serpent (Numbers 21). There are eight Passion Psalms: 15, 21, 30, 39, 40, 54, 68, 108. But the most famous of all writers on the suffering Messiah is the prophet Isaiah: 42, 1-7; 49, 1-7; 50, 4-9; 52, 13—53, 12. There are also two well known texts from the prophet Zacharias: 12, 10; 13, 7-9.

A change came over Cleophas and Ammaon as they listened spellbound to this learned rabbi; their steps were light and their hearts singing as they approached Emmaus. Our Lord would have gone on, had they not invited him to stay with them; charity is the virtue that he demands of his followers (p. 338). Jesus now rewards their faith and love by making himself known to them. The precise moment was 'when he broke bread' (this phrase usually means the Eucharist, see p. 436; it is hardly so here, rather some recognizable mannerism or the characteristic solemnity of Jesus' action). His mission accomplished, he disappeared; he had come to restore their faith, not to resume his former way of life. It was now 'towards evening' (between three and six o'clock); the two disciples set out at once for Jerusalem.

### The Cenacle Sunday Evening 9 April

This was an official meeting of the twelve (called 'the eleven' by Luke, owing to the defection of Judas; in reality they were only ten, since Thomas was absent) to consider the three appearances of Jesus. They had just finished their evening meal; the doors were securely barred (it was probably the Cenacle); it was understood that they were not to be disturbed. As they were discussing



They cowered down, full of terror, thinking that they were seeing an apparition. 'What,' he said to them, 'are you dismayed? Whence come these surmises in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, to be assured that it is myself; touch me, and look; a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see that I have.' And as he spoke thus, he showed them his hands and his feet and his side. Thus the disciples saw the Lord, and were glad.

Then, while they were still doubtful, and bewildered with joy, he asked them, 'Have you anything to eat?'

So they put before him a piece of roast fish; so he took it, and ate in their presence.

Once more Jesus said to them, 'Peace be upon you; I came upon an errand from my Father, and now I am sending you out in my turn.' With that, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound.'

### **The Risen Lord Convinces Thomas**

There was one of the twelve, Thomas, who is also called Didymus, who was not with them when Jesus came. And when the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord,' he said to them, 'Until I have seen the mark of the nails on his hands, until I have put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, you will never make me believe.'

So, eight days afterwards, once more the disciples were within, and Thomas was with them; and the doors were locked. Jesus came and stood there in their midst; 'Peace be upon you,' he said.

Then he said to Thomas, 'Let me have your finger; see, here are my hands. Let me have your hand; put it into my side. Cease your doubting, and believe.'

Thomas answered, 'You are my Lord and my God.'



the evidence, without knocking or opening the door Jesus was there in the room (see *Subtilitas*, p. 407). His first greeting was the familiar shalom that he had last spoken to them in this same room on Thursday evening (p. 358). The glory and brightness of his bodily appearance and the unexpectedness of his coming terrified them; they thought they were seeing his ghost (p. 140).

Unlike Magdalen, Cleophas, and Ammaon, they recognized that it was Jesus; what they doubted was the reality of his physical body. It might be only the materialization of his spirit. The only real test is touch; their hands would pass through a ghost. Condescending to their weak faith, he gives them a further proof: he eats in their presence (see *Impassibilitas*, p. 407).

Our Lord does not give the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit (p. 356) on this occasion; that is reserved for later (p. 430). Here it is the gift of a special spiritual power (to forgive sins is to confer spiritual life). The same power given earlier (pp. 168, 182) is now renewed and definitely conferred on the apostles; it is the institution of the sacrament of Penance.

### **The Cenacle Sunday Morning 16 April**

This meeting of the apostles (called 'the twelve' by John; it was the official title of our Lord's chosen leaders) was held probably to make final arrangements for the return to Galilee; the previous day was the conclusion of the paschal octave. Again the Cenacle is the location; it is a morning scene rather than at night. Thomas had refused to attend the council of a week before: Magdalen, Cleophas and Ammaon, and even Peter were suffering from hallucination!

Our Lord kept his crucifixion wounds (the glorified bodies of others will be free from any injury inflicted during their mortal lives) as glorious emblems of his victory on the cross; there could not be a more touching way of exciting the faith and love of his disciples. But Thomas held out for a whole week against the testimony of all; he was a hard-headed rationalist (p. 354); not even content with seeing, he must touch as well. Suddenly, without warning, our Lord stood before him; Thomas could not move.



And Jesus said to him, 'Have you learned to believe, because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have learned to believe.'

There are many other miracles Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which are not written down in this book; so much has been written down, that you may keep on believing Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so believing find life through his name.

### **A Miraculous Catch of Fish**

Jesus appeared to his disciples again afterwards, at the sea of Tiberias, and this is how he appeared to them. Simon Peter was there, and with him were Thomas, who is also called Didymus, and Nathanael, from Cana of Galilee, and two more of his disciples. Simon Peter told them, 'I am going out fishing'; and they said, 'We, too, will go with you.' So they went out and embarked on the boat; and all that night they caught nothing.

But when morning came, there was Jesus standing on the shore; only the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 'Have you caught anything, friends,' Jesus asked them, 'to season your bread with?'

And when they answered 'No,' he said to them, 'Cast to the right of the boat, and you will have a catch.' So they cast the net, and found before long they had no strength to haul it in, such a shoal of fish was in it.

Whereupon the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.'

And Simon Peter, hearing him say that it was the Lord, girded up the fisherman's coat, which was all he wore, and sprang into the sea. The other disciples followed in the boat (they were not far from land, only some hundred yards away), dragging their catch in the net behind them. So they went ashore, and found a charcoal fire made there, with fish and bread cooking on it.



So Jesus took hold of his hand to guide it to his wounds. It was not needed; he would not presume to touch the wounds of him whose divinity he now acknowledges in the most explicit act of faith in the gospels (pp. 168, 212). They are the words of a man completely convinced (p. 282). 'What he saw,' says St. Gregory, 'was a man and his wounds; he learned to believe that the risen man was God.' And, as a word of comfort to all future believers, our Lord praises those who make an act of faith on the authority of God, not on factual experience.

### Lake of Galilee April 30 A.D.

After an absence of six months (p. 186), the apostles are back again in the familiar surroundings of the lake of Galilee; but all is so strange and different without the Master. Everything they see—the boats, the synagogue, the furniture in the house—brings back memories of the past; they cannot go anywhere without being reminded of him who occupies all their thoughts. The events of the past two weeks have altered the shape of their lives completely; they have not adjusted themselves yet to an existence without Jesus to counsel and strengthen them.

St. John records Jesus' first appearance in Galilee. While waiting for his promised coming (p. 410), four of them (all apostles; Nathanael is the same as Bartholomew, p. 43; 'two more of his disciples' is John's way of referring to himself and his brother) accept Peter's suggestion of a night's fishing. They set off from Capharnaum along the shore to Tabgha; Peter's boat is still seaworthy, though the nets are in poor condition after lying idle.

As the first signs of day were showing over the hills where the herd of swine had once raced madly down into the lake (p. 124), they pulled in the net and began rowing to the shore. Someone on the promontory called out to them that there was a shoal of fish to the right of the boat. They lowered the net almost without thinking (a man on shore often directed fishermen; he could see better from a height), rowing round in a circle. They started to haul in the net. John had the feeling all this had happened before: yes—just two years ago—exactly the same (p. 68). Peter



'Bring some of the fish you have just caught,' Jesus said to them; and Simon Peter, going on board, hauled in the net to land. It was loaded with great fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and with all that number the net had not broken.

When Jesus said to them, 'Come and break your fast,' none of the disciples ventured to ask him, 'Who are you?' knowing well that it was the Lord.

So Jesus came up and took bread, which he gave to them, and fish as well. Thus Jesus appeared to his disciples a third time after his rising from the dead.

### **Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep**

And when they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you care for me more than these others?'

'Yes, Lord,' he told him, 'you know well that I love you.'

And he said to him, 'Feed my lambs.'

And again, a second time, he asked him, 'Simon, son of John, do you care for me?'

'Yes, Lord,' he told him, 'you know well that I love you.'

He said to him, 'Tend my shearlings.'

Then he asked him a third question, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was deeply moved when he was asked a third time, 'Do you love me?' and said to him, 'Lord, you know all things; you can tell that I love you.'

Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Believe me when I tell you this; as a young man, you would gird yourself and walk where you had the will to go, but when you have grown old, you shall stretch out your hands, and another shall gird you, and lead you where you go, not of your own will.'

So much he told him, prophesying the death by which he was to glorify God; and with that he said to him, 'Follow me.'



paused only to tuck his long loose garment (p. 239) in his belt.

When Jesus asks them to add some of theirs to what he has prepared already, it is Peter who goes on board to supervise the landing of the catch. The boat is his, and so is the net; he is in command of operations. Peter and his associates do the work, but the results come only through the divine power of Jesus (pp. 358-360). This is surely their first lesson in how the kingdom works: the net that never breaks is the Church that remains one (p. 370), no matter how important or numerous its members. (There were 153 known species of fish; possibly our Lord meant this number to indicate the universality of the Church—all nations.)

While the five are counting the fish, their eyes keep straying to the fire. They know that the man there is the Master; but now they are beginning to understand his supreme dignity; they are filled with reverential awe in the presence of God. The old intimacy of early days has gone; a new and deeper union is taking its place; but this will not be fully understood till Pentecost.

Jesus' invitation to breakfast is a welcome sound to their ears; they have eaten like this many a time before. Our Lord knows these men so well; he waits till they have eaten, and the sun has brought warmth and normality. Memories of the things he did, and the lessons he taught here by the lake, go running through their minds. It was here, in Peter's boat off the promontory, that he first spoke in parables; those vivid masterpieces in which he outlined the form and purpose of his kingdom. This morning's incident was all planned and arranged by the Master; unknowingly they had been acting a parable, a rehearsal of how the kingdom was to function. And now to this first glimmer of understanding, Jesus brings the clear light of his own divine purpose in working the miracle. There is no longer any need for him to be in the boat; he has given his authority to Peter. He is the captain of the boat, the rock on which the building stands (p. 168), 'the support of his brethren' (p. 352), the shepherd of the flock (p. 212); he is the vicar of Christ.

A shepherd must love his sheep (p. 214); but love of the neigh-



Peter turned, and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following him; the same who leaned back on his breast at supper and asked, 'Who is it that is to betray you?' Seeing him, Peter asked Jesus, 'And what of this man, Lord?'

Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he should wait till I come, what is it to you? It is for you to follow me.'

That was why the story went round among the brethren that this disciple was not to die. But Jesus did not say, 'He is not to die'; he said, 'If it is my will that he should wait till I come, what is it to you?'

It is the same disciple that bears witness of all this and has written the story of it; and we know well that his witness is truthful. There is much else besides that Jesus did; if all of it were put in writing, I do not think the world itself would contain the books which would have to be written.

### **Final Commission to the Apostles**

And now the eleven disciples took their journey into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had bidden them meet him. When they saw him there, they fell down to worship; though some did not recognize him until he came near and spoke to them; 'All authority in heaven and on earth,' he said, 'has been given to me; you, therefore, must go out all over the world, and preach the gospel to the whole of creation, making disciples of all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all the commandments which I have given you; he who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who refuses belief will be condemned.'

'Where believers go, these signs shall go with them; they will cast out devils in my name, they will speak in tongues that are strange to them; they will take up serpents in their hands, and drink poisonous draughts with-



bour will soon grow cold unless it is based on the love of God (p. 318). Peter's love for the Lord must be strong, and deep, and courageous. Three times in the one night his devotion to his Master had been found wanting (p. 382); he now makes amends by a threefold declaration of affection. The first two times, Jesus uses the word *agapao* ('do you care for me'); it is an act of the will, supernatural love (p. 92). Peter, in his humility, does not lay claim to such exalted love; the word he uses, *phileo* ('I love you'), is the natural affection of the heart. He no longer boasts of the superiority of his devotion, as he did at the Last Supper (p. 352); he knows now how weak and unreliable man is without divine help. When Jesus uses the word *phileo* for his third question, Peter is distressed almost to tears; he makes no attempt to vindicate his profession of love, he appeals only to the divine knowledge of the Master. To this new, humble, contrite Peter, Jesus can safely confide his sheep. He now promises his vicar on earth that he will not only live his life; he will die his death. This is the final seal of divine approval.

### **Mount of Beatitudes May 30 A.D.**

The scene just narrated (by St. John) was our Lord's first appearance in Galilee; this (from the synoptists) is his last, about a month later. The appearances of Jesus between are passed over in silence (p. 426). The faith of the apostles has deepened; their first act now, on meeting the Master, is to fall down in worship; they have changed much since Resurrection Day (pp. 412, 418).

'The mountain' of this official meeting of the eleven is surely that same place above Capharnaum where Jesus had selected his twelve apostles, two years before (p. 82). There, that same day, in his Sermon on the Mount, he proclaimed the new spirit and laws of his kingdom (pp. 86-96). Now, he is giving them his authoritative divine commission to establish the kingdom all over the world (up till this their activity has been restricted to the Jewish nation, p. 132). He emphasizes its catholicity by the repetition of 'all' (five times). Membership in the kingdom is by the sacrament of Baptism (pp. 35, 48), conferred in the name of the Blessed Trinity; this is not only the form of the sacrament,



out harm; they will lay their hands upon the sick and make them recover.

‘This is what I told you,’ he said, ‘while I still walked in your company; how all that was written of me in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, must be fulfilled.’ Then he enlightened their minds, to make them understand the scriptures; ‘So it is written,’ he told them, ‘and so it was fitting that Christ should suffer, and should rise again from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Of this, you are the witnesses. And behold I am with you all through the days that are coming, until the consummation of the world.’

### The Ascension of Our Lord

The first book which I wrote, Theophilus, was concerned with all that Jesus set out to do and teach, until the day came when he was taken up into heaven. He then laid a charge, by the power of the Holy Spirit, on the apostles whom he had chosen. He had shown them by many proofs that he was still alive, after his passion; throughout the course of forty days he had been appearing to them, and telling them about the kingdom of God.

And now he gave them orders, as he shared a meal with them, not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the fulfilment of the Father’s promise: ‘Behold, I am sending down upon you the gift which was promised by my Father; you must wait in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high. John’s baptism was with water, but there is a baptism with the Holy Spirit which you are to receive, not many days from this.’

And as he led them out towards Bethany, his companions asked him, ‘Lord, do you mean to restore the dominion to Israel here and now?’



it also indicates that men become the possession and temples of God (p. 370). Baptism is not a magical rite; a person must have faith before it can bring grace to his soul (our Lord is speaking only of adult converts, not infants). But Christianity is more than mental acceptance of truths; it is a way of life; the convert must repent of his sins, and observe the commandments. He must both know and love God (p. 368).

The passion and death of Christ would be a difficulty in the minds of men (I Cor. 1, 23); so our Lord explained how God's plan was foretold in the scriptures (p. 416). He also promised permanent miraculous powers (p. 218) to his Church; they will be 'signs' of his presence. Though not present visibly as the Shekinah of old (p. 199), he will be really with them in a spiritual way (pp. 354-360); not for an instant will he leave his Church.

#### **Mount Olivet Thursday 18 May 30 A.D.**

These are the opening words of the Acts of the Apostles, Luke's sequel to his Gospel, dedicated to Theophilus (p. 4; his name means 'friend of God,' probably a baptismal name). He mentions the commission ('charge') given to the apostles on the mount of Beatitudes, and then casually refers to many appearances of Jesus, not recorded in the gospels (I Cor. 15, 6-7). Though our Lord did not resume his former way of life with his apostles, he appeared to them frequently. During that month in Galilee he explained details of government, organization, sacraments, and the scriptures; this teaching of his is called oral tradition. It was not part of the public preaching of the faith, but reserved for converts after their reception into the Church (the Discipline of the Secret is the name often given to this hiding away of the more intimate practices of Christian life).

At our Lord's command, the apostles came back to Jerusalem to prepare for the feast of Pentecost, still ten days off; and now the time for his solemn parting came. It was a Thursday, six weeks since he celebrated the first Mass (p. 350). What better parting gift could there be than Mass and holy communion? The Eucharist is the sacrament of love and union (I Cor. 10, 17). There in the Cenacle, Jesus sat down for the last time with his



But he told them, 'It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. Enough for you, that the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and you will receive strength from him; you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and throughout Judca, in Samaria, yes, and to the ends of the earth.'

And so the Lord Jesus, when he had said this, lifted up his hands and blessed them; and even as he blessed them he parted from them; they saw him lifted up, and a cloud caught him away from their sight. And as they strained their eyes towards heaven, to watch his journey, all at once two men in white garments were standing at their side. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking heavenwards? He who has been taken from you into heaven, this same Jesus, will come back in the same fashion, just as you have watched him going into heaven.' And they bowed down to worship him who is seated now at the right hand of God.

Then, from the mountain which is called Olivet, they went back full of joy to Jerusalem; the distance from Jerusalem is not great, a sabbath day's journey. Coming in, they went up into the upper room where they dwelt, Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphacus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the brother of James. All these, with one mind, gave themselves up to prayer, together with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the rest of the women and his brethren; they spent their time continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

### **Matthias Appointed to Judas' Place**

At this time, Peter stood up and spoke before all the brethren; a company of about a hundred and twenty were gathered there. 'Brethren,' he said, 'there is a prophecy in scripture that must needs be fulfilled; that which the



eleven apostles. It was of the coming of the Holy Spirit that he spoke, just as at the Last Supper (pp. 356, 362); with his deep understanding and affection he would not distress them by mention of his departure that day. Instead, he took their thoughts back to John the Baptist, who had led most of them to him (pp. 40-42); it was his last gracious tribute to his herald.

As he led them out, in early afternoon, over the familiar road past Gethsemani, they sensed the approach of some momentous happening. Jesus was like a conqueror marching to victory; they felt confident and elated, as they looked down over the city of Jerusalem. Was he going to set up the twelve thrones (p. 276) here on the summit of Olivet for all Jerusalem to witness the kingdom come in glory? Their provincial minds have not yet grasped that the kingdom is to be Catholic, not a Jewish-dominated state. If only they could have had a vision of St. Peter's at Rome in A.D. 1950!

The Ascension is the conclusion of our Lord's life on earth and the final proof of his divinity (p. 148). He did not simply disappear from sight, as he could have done by the natural power of a glorified body (see *Agilitas*, p. 407); he was visible as he rose slowly and majestically in the air, until the *Shekinah* ('cloud,' pp. 172, 199) hid him from their sight. The apostles remain on earth, but their minds are in heaven with Jesus (Col. 3, 1-17; I Thess. 4, 14-16); he is now back with the Father (Heb. 9, 24).

With him went all the holy souls who had waited so long for heaven to open: Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaias, Joseph, John the Baptist. Did any of these ascend with glorified bodies? It seems fitting that the bodies of the 'holy men,' who rose on Easter Sunday (p. 402), did not return to the grave, but accompanied our Lord to glory on Ascension Day.

### **The Cenacle 8 a.m. Sunday 28 May**

At the Last Supper the apostles were inconsolable at the thought of losing Jesus (p. 358); but they have grown in understanding during the past month. He has gone away now, and they are filled with joy, not sadness. It is probably to the Cenacle



Holy Spirit made, by the lips of David, about Judas, who showed the way to the men that arrested Jesus. Judas was counted among our number, and had been given a share in this ministry of ours.' (With the price of his treachery, this man came into possession of a field; and afterwards, when he fell from a height, and his belly burst open, so that he was disembowelled, all Jerusalem heard of it, and the field came to be called, in their language, Hakeldama, that is, the Field of Blood.) 'Well, in the book of Psalms the words are written, "Let their camping-place be deserted, and let no man be found to dwell in it." And again, "Let another take over his office." There are men who have walked in our company all through the time when the Lord Jesus came and went among us, from the time when John used to baptize to the day when he, Jesus, was taken from us. One of these ought to be added to our number as a witness of his resurrection.'

So they named two of them, Joseph called Barsabbas, who had been given the fresh name of Justus, and Matthias. And they offered this prayer, 'Lord, you who know the hearts of all men, show us which of these two you have chosen to take his place in this work of apostleship, from which Judas has fallen away, and gone to the place which belonged to him.'

They gave them lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he took rank with the eleven apostles.

### **The Descent of the Holy Ghost**

When the day of Pentecost came around, while they were all gathered together in unity of purpose, all at once a sound came from heaven like that of a strong wind blowing, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then appeared to them what seemed to be tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in strange languages, as the Spirit gave utterance to each.



they return from Olivet, now the headquarters of the Church (pp. 342, 377, 408, 418). In preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit, they give themselves to prayer, as the Master did before any important undertaking; they have a powerful advocate in the mother of Jesus and now the mother of his Church (p. 398).

Our Lord left no doubt as to who was to rule the kingdom; he had specifically appointed Peter as his vicar. And Peter does not ask for a vote of confidence; he takes the burden of authority, in obedience to the command of the Master. His first papal act is to elect a successor to Judas. Quite clearly Jesus had chosen twelve, and that number has special meaning (p. 82). St. Peter shows that he has been listening intently to Jesus explaining the scriptures (p. 426). He quotes two psalms to prove that both Judas' death (Psalm 68) and replacement by another (Psalm 108) were foretold by God. (Probably the details of Judas' suicide—the tree on the edge of a cliff, the rope breaking or slipping—were added by Luke, and not part of Peter's speech.) As vicar of Christ he undertook the obligation of carrying out the command of God in Psalm 108 (literally it referred probably to Achitophel, 2 Kings 15-17; but that traitor was a type of Judas). The two selected for ballot were members of the seventy-two disciples (p. 216); both filled the essential qualification of association with Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry (p. 35). Unable to decide between two suitable candidates, they had recourse to the customary method of selection by lots (p. 4; 1 Kings 10, 20; Jonas 1, 7).

Just as our Lord waited for the divine signal to begin his public ministry (p. 34), so his Mystical Body, the Church, receives a divine impulse to start its work. The Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove, reminiscent of the beginning of creation; the 'sound of a strong wind blowing' and the 'tongues of fire' are reminiscent of God's voice like thunder, and the lightning at mount Sinai. It was there that Israel came into being as an organized body; today is the birthday of the new Israel, with its twelve apostles and its new commandment (p. 352), bringing life to all men.



Among those who were dwelling in Jerusalem at this time were devout Jews from every country under heaven; so, when the noise of this went abroad, the crowd which gathered was in bewilderment; each man severally heard them speak in his own language. And they were all beside themselves with astonishment; 'Are they not all Galileans speaking?' they asked. 'How is it that each of us hears them talking his own native tongue? There are Parthians among us, and Medes, and Elamites; our homes are in Mesopotamia, or Judea, or Cappadocia; in Pontus or Asia, Phrygia or Pamphylia, Egypt or the parts of Libya round Cyrene; some of us are visitors from Rome, some of us are Jews and others proselytes; there are Cretans among us too, and Arabians; and each has been hearing them tell of God's wonders in his own language.'

So they were all beside themselves with perplexity, and asked one another, 'What can this mean?'

There were others who said, mockingly, 'They have had their fill of sweet wine.'

### **Peter's Explanation to the Jews**

But Peter, with the eleven apostles at his side, stood there and raised his voice to speak to them; 'Men of Judea,' he said, 'and all you who are dwelling in Jerusalem, I must tell you this; listen to what I have to say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine in the morning. This is what was foretold by the prophet Joel: "In the last times, God says, I will pour out my spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and daughters will be prophets. Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and I will pour out my spirit in those days upon my servants and handmaids, so that they will prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and whirling smoke; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes,



'Fire' and 'wind' symbolize the double influence of the Holy Spirit. Holy: fire is the symbol of charity (p. 240), the intimate, personal relationship promised by Christ (p. 356). Spirit: which means breath, wind (p. 48), a vital, dynamic power that will enable the apostles to convert the world (p. 364). The tongues of fire were seen only by the hundred and twenty persons in the Cenacle; the wind was heard by the whole city. The primary effect of this visitation was the fulness of divine grace, as in the sacrament of Confirmation; this inner transformation was made known by an ecstatic form of prayer 'in strange languages.'

It is probably a street scene that is described; the crowd met the group from the Cenacle making their way to the temple. Many of the Jews listening to them were from foreign lands; they caught the sound of the language spoken in their country of residence, and gathered round the person praying in that tongue. Fifteen countries are only a sample; there were probably many others. The Church is no longer Jewish: one nation, one language. It is Catholic: it speaks to all men in their own native idiom.

### **The Temple 9 a.m. Sunday 28 May**

The first act of the Mystical Body of Christ was to pray; its second was the proclamation by Christ's vicar that Jesus is the divine Redeemer. The first showed the inner life of the Church. The second showed its function in society: to bring the redemption of its Founder to all men (p. 83). It was appropriate that the Church's missionary activity should commence in the temple, the one place on earth where true divine worship had been offered to God for a thousand years (p. 289). Christianity was not a totally new religion; it did not break with the past; it perfected and completed the revelation given by God to his chosen people (Hebrews 1, 1-3).

It was probably in Solomon's porch (where Jesus used to teach, p. 244) that Peter addressed the crowd. A great change has come over him since last he was surrounded by a crowd (pp. 380-382). Then he was only a scared Galilean fisherman trying to avoid publicity; now he represents his glorified Master; the divine



great and glorious. And then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

'Men of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man duly accredited to you from God; such were the miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves well know. This man you have put to death; by God's fixed design and foreknowledge, he was betrayed to you, and you, through the hands of sinful men, have cruelly murdered him. But God raised him up again, releasing him from the pangs of death; it was impossible that death should have the mastery over him. It is in his person that David says, "Always I can keep the Lord within sight; always he is at my right hand, to make me stand firm. So there is gladness in my heart, and rejoicing on my lips; my body, too, shall rest in confidence that you will not leave my soul in the place of death, or allow your faithful servant to see corruption. You have shown me the way of life; you will make me full of gladness in your presence."

'My brethren, I can say this to you about the patriarch David without fear of contradiction, that he did die, and was buried, and his tomb is among us to this day. But he was a prophet, and he knew God had promised him on oath that he would set the sons of his body upon his throne; it was of the Christ he said, foreseeing his resurrection, that he was not left in the place of death, and that his body did not see corruption. God, then, has raised up this man, Jesus, from the dead; we are all witnesses of it.

'And now, exalted at God's right hand, he has claimed from his Father his promise to bestow the Holy Spirit; and he has poured out that Spirit, as you can see and hear for yourselves. David never went up to heaven, and yet David has told us, "The Lord said to my Master, Sit on my right hand, while I make your enemies a footstool under your feet."

'Let it be known, then, beyond doubt, to all the house



power that has just come to dwell within him gives unction and conviction to his words (pp. 234, 364). He no longer speaks in a foreign tongue (that was given for prayer, not for preaching, I Cor. 12-14); he preaches in his native Aramaic. All these were Jews; though many lived in foreign lands, they would know enough of their mother tongue to be able to follow him.

Like his Master before him, he takes up a line of thought suggested by the present circumstances (pp. 56, 234-238): that startling spectacle of a hundred people, oblivious to the world about them, all talking at once and in a great variety of languages. First of all he refutes the charge of drunkenness by an appeal to fact and custom; on a festival such as this a fast was kept until noon; drink was never taken until the evening meal. Then he gives the real reason for this strange conduct: it is what God himself foretold in the scriptures. Not a few individuals here and there (Numbers 11, 24-30), but a universal outpouring of God's spirit. The Jews who had asked Jesus so often for 'a sign' (pp. 46, 144, 164, 228, 240, 398) ought to be satisfied with this morning's demonstration. This divine visitation marks the beginning of a new era ('the day of the Lord' is used in the same sense as p. 366), an intimate sharing in God's own life. It is the birthday of Christianity that is described in the traditional Hebrew imagery of cosmic 'signs' and 'wonders,' not the end of the world (similar language is used of the fall of Jerusalem, p. 332).

The last sentence of Joel's prophecy serves as a natural transition to Jesus (Peter knows that Jesus himself is 'the Lord'). It is just seven weeks since the Jews last saw Jesus. They had seen him die; that his body was no longer in the tomb could be verified by a visit to Golgotha. Peter's purpose is to prove that our Lord is alive (the opposition held that he was still dead, p. 414). The personal evidence of the twelve ('we are all witnesses of it') is only given a mention in Luke's summary; Peter surely gave much more detail. His main proof is from Psalm 15: David wrote in the first person, clearly not of himself; he has been dead for a thousand years (they can see his tomb near the pool of Siloam, Nehemias 3, 15-16). David was speaking, under divine inspira-



of Israel, that God has made him Master and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

### Three Thousand Converts

When they heard this, their consciences were stung; and they asked Peter and his fellow apostles, 'Brethren, what must we do?'

'Repent,' Peter said to them, 'and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have your sins forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and for your children, and for all those, however far away, whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'

And he used many more words besides, urgently appealing to them; 'Save yourselves,' he said, 'from this false-minded generation.'

So all those who had taken his words to heart were baptized, and about three thousand souls were won for the Lord that day. These occupied themselves continually with the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and the fixed times of prayer, and every soul was struck with awe, so many were the wonders and signs performed by the apostles in Jerusalem. All the faithful held together, and shared all they had, selling their possessions and their means of livelihood, so as to distribute to all, as each had need. They persevered with one accord, day by day, in the Temple worship, and, as they broke bread in this house or that, took their share of food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and winning favour with all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship others that were to be saved.

And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord aiding them, and attesting his word by the miracles that went with them.



tion, on behalf of his Son, the Messiah (p. 29); now enthroned in glory, Jesus shows his divine authority by communicating his Spirit to his followers.

The Mystical Body of Christ came into being only after his physical body had been glorified (p. 194); this organic society is the Church, the continued existence of the glorified Christ (Eph. 1, 22-23). Many Jews who witnessed the crucifixion showed the first signs of repentance on Good Friday (p. 402); touched by Peter's sermon, they are moved to true sorrow. His advice to them is not only to repent, but to become incorporated into Christ (that is what 'baptized in the name of Jesus Christ' means; it is not the form of Baptism, p. 424). Christianity is more than acceptance of a set of beliefs, and a code of laws; it is a living thing, a society united and vivified by the divine life of the Blessed Trinity (p. 370). Membership is by the sacrament of Baptism (the new converts were probably baptized by immersion in the pool of Siloam, pp. 32, 206).

After two years public teaching, our Lord had only a few hundred intimate followers; but on the first day of the Church's public life their number suddenly increased to three thousand (this was how God had planned it, p. 83). And immediately they began to live a community life based on that of our Lord and his disciples (pp. 106, 274-276); it was a voluntary surrender of material possessions as a practical expression of the charity that now motivated their lives.

Four factors of their growth in holiness are listed. (1) 'The apostles' teaching': the life and doctrine of Jesus, part of which was set down later in the four gospels, part handed on only by oral tradition. (2) 'The apostles' fellowship': no longer the authority of the high priest and the Pharisees, but obedience to Christ's chosen rulers. The Church was a distinct, independent society right from Pentecost. (3) 'The breaking of bread': this is a technical term in the early Church for the Blessed Eucharist (p. 350), the source and centre of unity and sanctity. (4) 'Fixed times of prayer': this is the liturgy, the public prayer of the Church.







# Chronological Harmony

The most complete Gospel for each Incident  
is printed in *Italic Type*

The Gospels for Sundays and Holydays  
are marked with an *Asterisk*



		MATT.	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	PAGE
Sept. 6 B.C.	The Angel Gabriel appears to Zachary, Jerusalem .....			1, 1-25		4
March 5 B.C.	The Annunciation, Nazareth .....			1, 26-38		6
April	The Visitation; Mary's Magnificat, Ain Karim .....			1, 39-55*		8
24 June	Birth of John; Zachary's Benedictus, Ain Karim .....			1, 56-80		10
July	Joseph marries Mary; Jesus' Genealogy, Nazareth .....	1, 1-25				12
25 Dec.	Birth of Jesus; the Shepherds, Bethlehem .....			2, 1-20*		16
2 Feb. 4 B.C.	The Presentation in the Temple, Jerusalem .....			2, 21-38*		18
Feb. 4 B.C.	The Wise Men, Jerusalem and Bethlehem .....	2, 1-12				20
February	Flight into Egypt; the Innocents, Bethlehem .....	2, 13-18				22
May 4 B.C.	The Holy Family returns to Nazareth .....	2, 19-23		2, 39		24
April 9 A.D.	Jesus Lost and Found, Jerusalem .....			2, 40-52*		24
Oct. 27 A.D.	Mission of John the Baptist, River Jordan .....	3, 1-12	1, 1-8	3, 1-18*		30
Jan. 28 A.D.	Jesus baptized; his Genealogy, River Jordan .....	3, 13-17	1, 9-11	3, 21-38		32
Jan.-Feb.	The Devil tempts Jesus, Mt. Quarantal (near Jericho) ...	4, 1-11*	1, 12-13	4, 1-13		34
March	The Witness of John, Bethany beyond Jordan .....				1, 1-34*	36
	The first Apostles, Bethany beyond Jordan .....				1, 35-51	40
	The Water made Wine, Cana .....				2, 1-11*	44
Passover	Cleansing of the Temple, Jerusalem .....	21, 12-13	11, 15-17	19, 45-46*	2, 12-22	46
	Nicodemus: the spiritual Birth, Bethany (Mt. Olivet) ..				2, 23-3, 21	46
April	John makes way for Jesus, Aenon near Jordan .....				3, 22-36	50
May	John the Baptist in Prison, Machaerus .....			3, 19-20		56
	Jesus at Jacob's Well; living Water, Samaria .....				4, 1-42	56
	The Royal Official's Son, Cana .....				4, 43-54*	60
	First Preaching at Nazareth .....		1, 14-15	4, 14-22		62
	Jesus casts out a Devil, Capharnaum .....	4 12-17	1 21-28	4 31-37		64



	Cure of Peter's Mother-in-law, Capharnaum .....	8, 14-16	1, 29-39	7, 20-41	66
	The Miraculous Draught of Fish, Tabgha .....	4, 18-22	1, 16-20	5, 1-11*	68
	The Leper in a House, the Lakeside .....	8, 2-4	1, 40-45	5, 12-16	70
June	The Paralytic; Forgiveness of Sins, Capharnaum .....	9, 1-8*	2, 1-12	5, 17-26	70
	Call of Matthew; on Feasting and Fasting, Tabgha ....	9, 9-17	2, 13-22	5, 27-39	72
	Harvesting on the Sabbath, near Capharnaum .....	12, 1-8	2, 23-28	6, 1-5	78
	Cure of a Withered Hand on the Sabbath, Capharnaum .	12, 9-13	3, 1-5	6, 6-10	78
	Pharisees first Plot to kill Jesus, Capharnaum .....	12, 14-21	3, 6	6, 11	80
	Jesus calls his Twelve Apostles, near Capharnaum .....	10, 1-4	3, 7-19	6, 12-19	82
	The Eight Beatitudes, Mount of Beatitudes .....	5, 1-20*	.....	6, 20-26	86
	The moral Law; Charity, Mount of Beatitudes .....	5, 21-48*	.....	6, 27-36	88
	Acts of Piety; and Hypocrisy, Mount of Beatitudes ....	6, 1-18	.....	.....	92
	The practical Christian; solid Virtue, Mt of Beat. ....	7, 1-29*	.....	6, 37-49	94
	A Centurion's Faith, Capharnaum .....	8, 5-13*	.....	7, 1-10	98
July	The Dead brought to Life, Naim .....	.....	.....	7, 11-17*	100
September	Praise of John the Baptist, the Lakeside .....	11, 2-19*	.....	7, 18-35	102
	The Woman who loved much, Magdala .....	.....	.....	7, 36-50	104
October	Our Lord's spiritual Family, Capharnaum .....	12, 46-50	{ 3, 20-21 3, 31-35	{ 8, 1-3 8, 19-21	106
November	Parable of the Sower, Ain Tineh near Tabgha .....	13, 1-23	4, 1-25	8, 4-18*	110
	Parable of the Darnel, Ain Tineh .....	.....	4, 26-29	.....	114
	Parable of the Darnel Weed, Ain Tineh .....	13, 24-43*	.....	.....	114
	The Mustard Seed and the Leaven, Ain Tineh .....	13, 31-33*	4, 30-32	13, 18-21	116
	The Treasure and the Pearl, Ain Tineh .....	13, 44-46	.....	.....	116
	Parable of the Net, Ain Tineh .....	13, 47-52	.....	.....	116



		MATT	MARK	LUKE	JOHN	PAGE
December	The Storm on the Lake, crossing from West to East . . . .	8, 23-27*	4, 35-40	8, 22-25	.....	122
	The Devils of Gerasa, Kursi east of Lake . . . . .	8, 28-34	5, 1-20	8, 26-39	.....	122
	Jairus' Daughter; the Issue of Blood, Capharnaum . . . .	9, 18-26*	5, 21-43	8, 40-56	.....	124
	Two Blind Men Cured, Capharnaum . . . . .	9, 27-31	.....	.....	.....	128
	Jesus rejected at Nazareth . . . . .	13, 53-58	6, 1-6	4, 22-30	.....	130
March 29 A.D.	Mission of the Apostles, Capharnaum . . . . .	9, 35-10, 16	6, 7-13	9, 1-6	.....	132
	John the Baptist killed, Machaerus . . . . .	14, 1-12	6, 14-29	9, 7-9	.....	134
April	The Five Thousand, Plain of Bataiha N.E. of Lake . . . .	14, 13-21	6, 30-44	9, 10-17	6, 1-14*	136
	Jesus walks on the Water; Peter tries, on the Lake . . . .	14, 22-33	6, 45-52	.....	6, 15-21	140
May	Summary of later Mission, Plain of Genesareth . . . . .	14, 34-36	6, 53-56	.....	.....	142
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